cheques can be exchanged here. The rate is always slightly higher than the official bank rate. Be sure to check with other money changers to find out the true rate, as no one is to be fully trusted.

Outside the Old City

One of the other main bazaar areas is Saddar Bazaar. Here the more expensive shops are located as well as travel-agencies and the main post office and banks. It is where most of the foreigners do their shopping. It is considered quite safe for foreigners. However, in response to the more affluent shoppers, more beggars roam the streets. Many children can be seen selling little pieces of gum or combs for no more than one or two Rupees.

To the west of the city, about 20 minutes by bus, is an area called University Town, located across from the university. Here most of the development agencies have their offices and it is the residential area for many ex-pats (foreign aid workers) and rich locals. Much less happens here on the street, there are only a small number of shops. There is also no bustling traffic and after many days in the old city, university town is like the country side. Most houses have large gardens and all have high walls that are being raised as the security situation becomes more serious. Strangely enough the quietness of University Town, especially at night, made it less safe than the old city where tea-shops and restaurants were open 'till late.

In my three month stay, the most serious thing that happened was being pick-pocketed in a night bus coming from university town to the old city. I was never harassed or bothered, even while walking alone at night in the old city. One warning however, try to avoid becoming friends with policemen, they are the worst criminals. They will ask repeatedly if you can buy illegal alcohol for them, pretending to be your friend. I do not want to imagine the problems that would arise if one does so.

Continuing westwards the new area of Hyatabad is being built. Already a number of agencies have their offices here. It is a desolate place, built on a piece of desert. With no trees or big gardens the summer months are very hot. One wonders how the women cope, having no freedom to move outside the home.

The Refugee Camps

Across from Hyatabad is a huge Afghan refugee camp called Kacha-Gari. As many as 200,000 people live here in small mud brick houses. Along the road Afghans have set up wood dealerships, little workshops and even a garden centre. Inside the camps there are little bazaars where fruit, vegetables and meats are sold. Security in the camps is good, no thanks to the 50 odd Pakistani policemen, they are no force compared to the thousands of armed men inside the camps.

The camps are as the villages found in Afghanistan, except for their obvious huge population and the small size of the houses. Houses are made of mud/clay combined with straw. All houses are one story high with flat roofs. Walls, higher than a man surround the house and courtyard. Everything is kept clean, especially when one considers how many people live here. Officially, special permission is needed to visit the camps. One

can get this with the right contacts and goodwill of the authorities. However, if an Afghan wants to take you along, especially one with some authority, there is never a problem.

The recent repatriation of many Afghans also has its effects on the camps. Whole areas of houses have been deserted. The wooden support beams have been removed, so have the doors and window panes, taken back to Afghanistan. The buildings that remain look as if they were deserted a hundred years ago. According to my supervisor, a Afghan refugee woman claimed that the quick deterioration was due to the poor quality of the mud. The mud was, according to her, like everything else, definitely better in Afghanistan.

The Tribal Area

A little further down the road a checkpoint marks the beginning of tribal area, off limits to foreigners without the required permit. With the permit a guard accompanies the visitor for security. Foreigners are supposedly easily led astray by unscrupulous dealers, and tourists might be robbed. The real reason is that within the tribal areas vast quantities of arms, drugs, and alcohol are sold. Gun shops are filled to the brim with a great variety of fire arms, piles of hashish lie on display, and alcohol, which is forbidden everywhere else, is freely available. Some foreigners as well as locals have been known to visit the area's heroine dens, something the Pakistan government wishes to avoid.

I visited the area without a permit dressed as a local. I had no problems with the dealers, only on the way back was I stopped by a policeman with a machine gun and his mentally handicapped assistant. He kept me for an hour, offering me a hash cigarette that would have got me into real trouble had I accepted. After some time he brought me to his superior, who let me go right away back to Peshawar.

II Getting Around

Travelling from one place to another is most efficiently done by bus. The 'flying coaches' are very cheap and travel wherever one would like to go. The coaches are beautiful, built on top of truck chassis. The rounded wooded body is adorned with decorated aluminium. The side windows are blue and on top they carry wooden baggage racks painted in all colours of the rainbow. Allah Akbar (God is Great) and Ilhumdiallah (Praise be to God) are painted on the front and back windows. A clear view of the road is not necessary when God is on one's side. The interior is also decorated, but the sheer amount of passengers usually does not allow for full appreciation. Money is collected by a boy of any age, who climbs and pushes through the crowd, never missing a single passenger.

Just like the buses, the rickshaws are also colourfully decorated. They are a cheap and relatively fast way of transport as long as one sets the price before stepping inside. Do not be surprised if fumes enter the passenger cabin directly from the exhaust pipe. Taxis or Yellow cabs are a new phenomenon in Peshawar. They are faster, cleaner and not much more expensive.

Trucks are another appealing sight. Again these are hand built on a chassis. High wooden sides are held together by metal arches on top. The whole truck is hand painted with pictures, slogans, and colourful designs. The driver's cabin is something resembling a psychedelic nightmare; colours everywhere. The front of the truck has a large metal grid as a bumper. Above the driver's cabin there is placed either a clock or a plastic windmill, like those given to children at fairs. Both tell the time with equal accuracy. Trucks carry any load; wheat, lumber, and Afghan returnees.

Lighting regulations on all vehicles are followed with little precision. To clarify the point, here is a small, true account. When looking out of the hotel window one night I watched a big truck approaching, rumbling steadily along, on the wrong side of the road. The right front light was not working, the other compensating with double intensity. When the truck passed I happened to notice the rear lights. They were green. Laughing in disbelief I watched the joyfully coloured tail lights flickering on and off as the truck rode off into the distance.

III The People

Within the colourful, sometimes chaotic scenery described above, live the people. Afghans and Pakistanis from the North West Frontier Province are an impressive lot. One can tell the difference between Afghans and Pakistanis. The Pakistanis are a little darker and the Afghans have a wilder, if not prouder air about them. Their faces are pronounced by bright eyes, sometimes sky blue, and large noses. Many men have beards that visually accentuate their strong, proud character.

The relationship between Afghan and Pakistanis is relatively good, considering the vast amount of Afghan refugees. Afghans and Pakistanis of the North West Frontier Province speak the same language, dress in the same manner, go to the same Mosques, eat together in restaurants and are basically integrated into the daily activities. There are few, if any, violent confrontations between the two groups of people. Nevertheless, Afghans are often blamed for the problems faced by Pakistanis. Local Pakistanis blame Afghans for the crimes that are committed, for the high unemployment, the drug problem and anything else that irritates the critic.

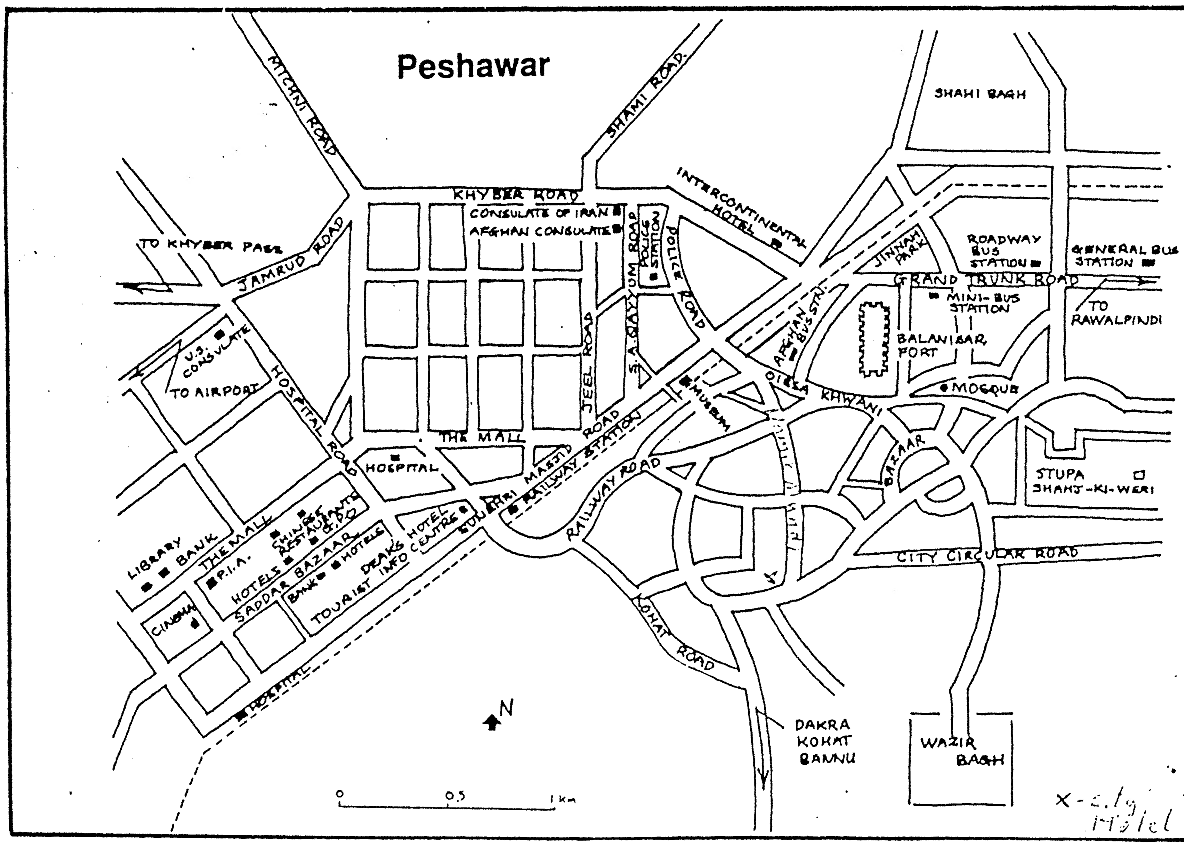
Their is also a jealousy that prevails among Pakistanis over the immense amount of aid that is being given to the refugees. It is true that almost all development workers in Peshawar are primarily involved with Afghans. Some hospitals, such as one providing plastic surgery for war victims, are not accessible to Pakistanis. Such inequities are valid reason for envy.

Wearing big shawls and traditional turbans, Afghans look to us as people from a long gone era, where only true men could survive. This is, of course, very much the case in this part of the world. Seeing an Afghan, standing tall on a wagon harnessing two colossal horses, riding at a steady pace, can be awe inspiring. These are real men in every sense of the word. They are macho, proud, have honour, and (supposedly) feel no pain.

Women are undoubtedly just as proud as the men. It is unimaginable that they could live alongside such wild individuals without being very tough themselves. However, as culture clearly separates men from women, most of the life of women remains a mystery, what is known to me is mostly secondary information. Girls are removed from public view at about the age of ten. After this time the only way women are seen is inside a chadri. The chadri is probably the most extreme veil in the world, covering the wearer from head to toe, a small netting permitting vision. Girls from Pakistani schools, however, usually only wear head scarves and a shawar-kamiz. Most of the women stay primarily inside the house, here they visit each other and are free to do what they please. In the three month stay I only saw two Afghan women of my age, speaking only to one.

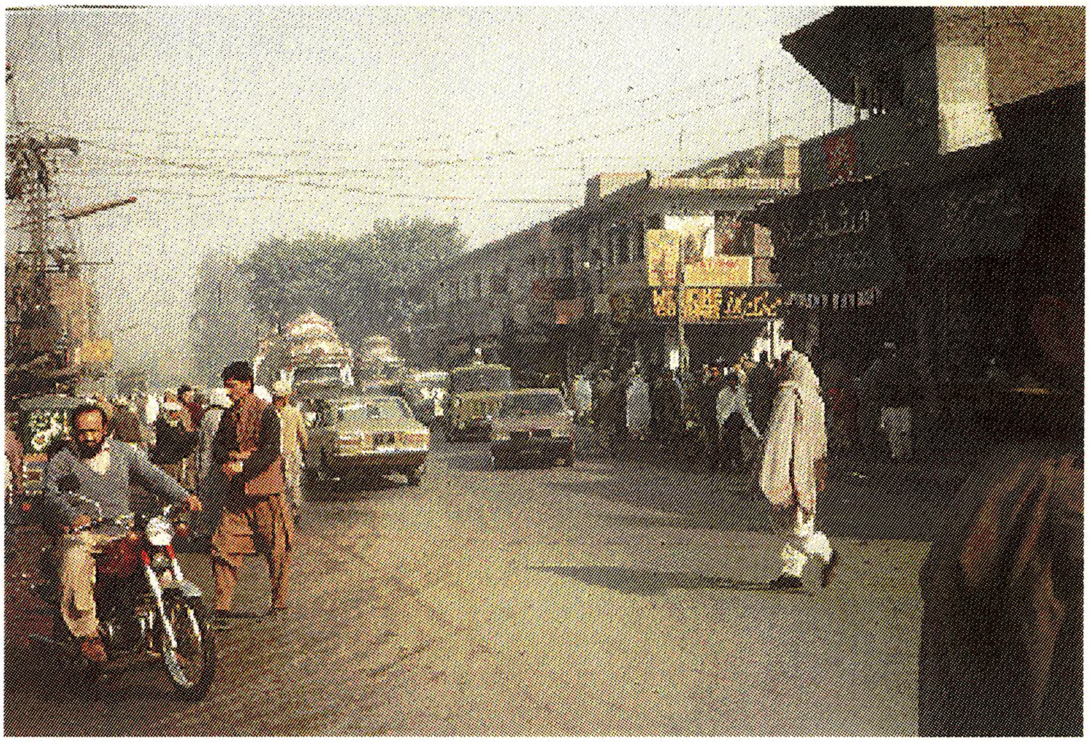
The charisma and beauty of Afghans, male and female, can be seen by looking at the children. They are bright eyed, handsome, and hardly shy. It is a sad thing to see them as sufferers of a war they had no part in starting. The only thing we can hope for is that the situation will improve and that children will once again be able to grow and develop in their own country, away from the unnatural environment of Peshawar and the camps.

In the following chapters it is the plight of children that is to be examined. I hope that the area description above will give some idea of the environment in which they live.

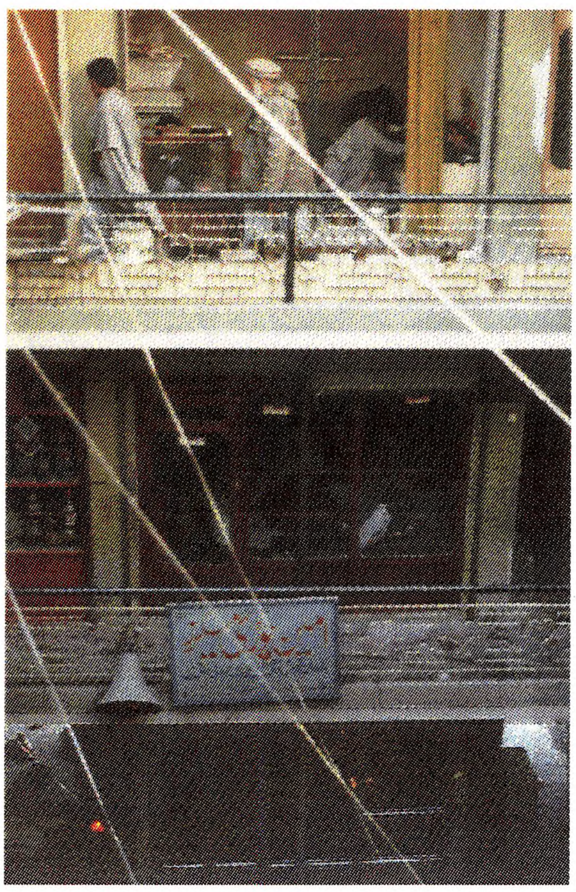


Notes:

[1] At this time (1987) 7,000 refugees were entering Pakistan every month. A more recent update on the spread of refugees in the different states was regrettably not available.



Just outside Andershier (to the right), Peshawar 1992.



Murad Market in Andershier.
Peshawar 1993.

Chapter Two

Defining Afghan Refugee Children

Afghan refugee children are estimated to number between 44 and 50 per cent of the total refugee population. Women and children together consist of 76 per cent of the registered refugee population. Among the children 48 percent is under the age of twelve (N.H. Dupree, 1992, p.6). In the following chapter a description of the Afghan refugee children is given. Their citizenship, their position as refugges, and their place in Afghan society are discussed.

I Afghans

For all intents and purposes a formal (in legal terms) definition of Afghans will be avoided here. In the many cases that involve large scale refugee population there is usually a wrangling over the issue of nationality. Situations arise in which states deliberately refuse to confer nationality to children born to refugees. Problems also arise due to conflicting national laws regarding nationality (UNHCR 1988, p.5). It thus stands to reason to give a more practical definition.

In this context, Afghans are all individuals who bear Afghan nationality and those born from Afghan refugee parents. The latter may not legally hold Afghan citizenship[1]. The special case of refugees who consider themselves Afghan, but have changed their nationality to that of the land of refuge, should also be included. Afghans comprise all the ethnic groups that make up the population of Afghanistan[2].

It is not very difficult to discover if someone is an Afghan or not. Afghans are a proud people and only a few would hide their nationality. This is especially so after having fought for years to free Afghanistan of the old regime[3]. This love for Afghanistan is also shown by the quick return of Afghans to Afghanistan as soon as an area is safe. Expected integration with the Pakistan population has been limited. It is publicly known who is Afghan or Pakistani.

The different ethnic groups of Afghanistan are represented in the refugee population. The largest ethnic group are the Pashtuns. In Afghanistan they numbered over 6.5 million, living mostly in the east and south of the country. Most Pashtuns are farmers, but often sedentary agriculture and herding are combined. A large number of Pashtuns, about one million, are totally nomadic (Newell and Newell 1981, p.23).

The second largest group are the Tadjiks who come from the northern territories of Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, Tadjiks live in settled communities, mostly in towns. Tadjiks are also the most productive farmers.

A number of mongoloid people live in the northern plains. The Uzbek form the largest of these groups. They are famous for their brilliant horsemanship, developing the game of Bushkashi. The Turkman, known for their carpets and jewellery, have their origin in the northwest of the country.

Another mongoloid ethnic minority, the Hazara, live mainly in the central part of the country. It is commonly believed that the Hazaras are descendants of Genghis Khan. This is however untrue, the Hazaras having settled in Afghanistan during a later period (L.Dupree 1973, p.70).

The Baluch live in the south and are both semi-sedentary and semi-nomadic. The Nuristani inhabit the steep mountain valleys of north eastern Afghanistan.

II Defining Refugees

Definitions of refugees have evolved over the years as the number of people on the move have been steadily increasing. Reasons for involuntary migrations have also become more varied and complex.

The Formal definition

The United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July, 1951, Article One, defines a refugee as 'an individual who, owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality or being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it' (United Nations, 1951).

With today's situation in mind, this definition seems somewhat out of date. Around the world the number of refugees as such has been estimated at around 13 million and the figure is growing. With the increase in the number of refugees, it is in the interest of many nations to adhere strictly to the definition and only accept a refugee if he can prove that he or she was personally persecuted (Khulman 1990, p.4). Another problem is that the definition does not include internally displaced people (Aga Khan and Bin Talal 1986, p.9). Surprisingly, people fleeing from war or general violence are also not recognized as refugees if they themselves have not been the target of persecution. Furthermore, economic refugees are not included.

For the law, this official definition is of use in determining the rights of refugees. The world is becoming more and more integrated and there is a growing necessity for international agreement on such issues. However, from a sociological/ anthropological point of view the definition can be improved.

The Sociological definition

A more practical definition of refugees is brought forth by Tom Khulman in his paper 'Towards a definition of Refugees'. He discusses the limitations of the UN and other official definitions. Using instead the term **involuntary migrants** he concludes that **distress** best describes the motivation for migration. People are forced to leave either by physical force or by some serious crisis in their place of origin. These problems also prevent people from returning to their home.

The definition puts the causes of the distress at the place of origin, making the problem a communal one and not one of individual persecution. Thus someone fleeing a generally dangerous situation can legitimately be classified as a refugee. The distinction between refugees and other involuntary migrants is that the former have left their home country (Khulman 1990, p.9).

It is this definition that was adhered to during the research. The Afghan crisis was clearly an exodus of people fleeing in fear of probable violence, besides the personal harassment, against them or their family. If they had waited to be personally dragooned, certainly many more would have suffered.

III Defining Refugee Children

In defining refugee children, there are some questions that arise. Again, there are some differences between working definitions of official organizations, those of anthropologists/sociologists and of the Afghans themselves. The official definitions are not as strict as those applying to adult refugees. Usually, aid organizations dealing with children are primarily concerned with their wellbeing and not with their legal status.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees has widened the official U.N. definition on refugees to accommodate the special case of children. This has resulted in a more realistic position and helps the setting up of programs in aid of this group. The UNHCR publication giving guidelines on refugee children (UNHCR 1988) understands refugees to be all persons of concern to the UNHCR, including refugees, asylum-seekers, and other externally displaced persons of concern to the Office. As regards to the term children, the UNHCR, as defined in Article 1 of the Convention of the rights of the Child, sees a child as a person up to 18 years old, unless the age of majority is lower under applicable national law. Field agencies may apply their help to those above the national age of majority even if this is less than 18 (UNHCR 1988).

IV The Afghan View on Childhood

The official definition of childhood can come into conflict when applying it in some societies. The following is a description of the traditional position of the child in Afghan society.

An interesting view on the position of the child in Afghanistan is given by Louis Dupree in his extensive account of Afghanistan, its history, land, and people. Even though practices vary in different regions and groups, a basic scheme of child development is given.

As soon as a baby is born the integration of the child into the group begins. From the first moment of birth the Islam is present and that remains so until death (and as many believe, after death as well). When a child is born the family holds a day long celebration, which will be especially joyful if the new born is a boy. The birth of a boy establishes the virility of father, the fertility of the mother, and gives the family an heir (Dupree 1973 p.192).

In most cases, on the third day after birth, the baby is given a name and he or she is blessed by a Mullah (religious leader). No matter what the gender, the infant will remain with the mother. She will train the child swiftly on the do's and do not's with the needed authority. She must take this responsibility, as fathers are often to loving and indulgent (op.cit. p.193).

Older children carry their younger brother or sister on their backs. They also keep watch over the family livestock and do little chores in and around the house. They quickly learn their socio-economic-political obligations.

Boys are circumcised around the age of seven, at which time they start to become men. By now they should be able to dress themselves and are allowed to wear a turban. Boys begin to work alongside their fathers learning the skills that they will use for the rest of their lives. Relations with girls of their age become less free as they move into adulthood. The usual age of marriage for boys is between 18 to 20 (op.cit. p.198).

In most areas there are no official ceremonies to mark puberty for girls, however in some areas, such as the Pashtun areas of Paktya, a type of brown sugar is passed among the women when she reaches puberty. Before this time and after, the girls learn all that is needed to keep a good household.

Being a dedicated Islamic people, dress and behaviour and the division of labour are clearly defined. Women and girls are bound to the home, while men and boys roam the streets. Separation of activities starts at an early age and at puberty it should be complete.

Louis Dupree notes that the Afghan children have no adolescence, that is to say, no transitional educational period away from their families to prepare them for their future. As young as ten years of age, Afghan boys, especially in rural areas, have the same responsibilities as men. It is only a literate, pluralistic society which can afford the long years of schooling to train its children to take their places in the adult world (op.cit. p.194).

Among the refugees a trend to strengthen these traditional values is noticeable. The insecure situation has even led those with progressive ideas to choose for stability in the old and trusted ways. Children can only enjoy a short childhood as their families push them towards adulthood. Chapter V deals with this idea in greater detail.

V Afghan Refugee Children; a Summary

With thirteen years of war, the only memories Afghan children have is that of a war/refugee situation. They have not been able to lead a life such as that of pre-war children. Educational facilities, both traditional and formal, were disrupted when people fled and families have split up. Many boys have also joined in the fighting. In the Afghan's view, a boy is considered a man as soon as he can hold a gun, especially during war time. With much of the traditional areas of learning gone, it will be difficult for these individuals to pick up normal lives when they return to Afghanistan.

To come to a clear definition usable in this research, the different definitions had to be combined, those used by aid organizations, while keeping in mind the ideas of the Afghans themselves.

As this paper also examines the role taken up by aid agencies providing help for children, it seems wise to adhere, at least in part, to that definition. However, since the research took place among Afghans, it is sensible to approach children as young adults, or even as men and women, when that seems appropriate, i.e. when they consider themselves as such.

The definition of Afghan refugee children stands as follows: Individuals from Afghanistan who fled their country in a time of local distress and are below the age of eighteen. The individual does not necessarily have to be considered a child by him or herself or, in this case, by society in general. Furthermore, it is unimportant if the individual is registered as an Afghan by the authorities. It is thus understood that any child who regards him or herself as Afghan, regardless of his or her official papers, will be considered an Afghan.

Notes:

[1] Please note that for a Pashtun, the term Afghan means Pashtun.

[2] Please see Appendix II for a detailed description of the situation of Afghan Refugees.

[3] During my stay I never met an Afghan who claimed to be otherwise. Calling an Afghan a Pakistani would have not been seen as a compliment. The other way around, Pakistanis claiming to be Afghan did occur once in the bazaar. Afghans have a better reputation than Pakistanis for doing business.

Introduction

The main objective of this essay is to examine the work and education of Afghan refugee children in relation to their own development. The information presented here is the result of a three month research period on location in Peshawar, Pakistan. Both people involved with children, and the children themselves, were interviewed about these labour and educational activities.

Two major considerations make up the framework of this study. The first pertains to the more general context of development through education. The second examines the problems that hinder the formal education of children. Anxiety, distress, instability and uncertainty have greatly determined the attitudes of Afghan refugees. They have regressed to their trusted traditional ways as a secure means of survival, in turn rejecting modern development. For children this has meant an early adulthood. Instead of going to school, children are taught to work and fend for themselves.

This paper does not set out to prove the validity of this theory. This is primarily an exploratory study. Its central goal is to examine in detail the work and educational activities of Afghan refugee children. When appropriate, indicators of developmental regression are presented throughout the paper.

Five cases, representing working children in different economic categories, give detailed descriptions of the work done by children. Choices for development (education) vary in each case, as higher incomes create greater possibilities. But, as will be shown, higher income is not a guarantee for formal schooling. The uncertainty of many refugees has generated other priorities that influence child development.

On the work done by children, the crucial and interrelated questions are:
- What are the work activities of Afghan refugee children?
- Is work a priority and what is the role of schooling?
- What are the differences between the activities of boys and those of girls?
- To what extent are the children and their family dependent on this activity for their well being?

On the education of children the following questions stand central.
- What form of education, if any, are refugee children receiving?
- Do they attend school or are children receiving another form of education, be it technical training or learning on the job?
- Is there conflict between schooling and work?
- Are children interested in formal education or do they wish to learn direct skills for earning a living?
- To what extent is education limited for girls?, what are the differences between girls and boys?



Kacha Gari refugee camp, Peshawar 1992



Two refugee girls in Kacha Gari refuggee camp, Peshawar 1992

Chapter Three

Methodology of Field Research

One year before I arrived, an instructive lesson was learned by an anthropologist doing research in Chitral, north Pakistan. He had found himself the ultimate informer, or so he believed. An old man, who spoke some English and had lived all his life in the area, was fully trusted. The anthropologist spent four months taking down notes of tales the old man was telling him. Only a month before he was to depart, he discovered that all the things the old man had told him were false. Apparently the old man had done a similar trick before, and had found it greatly amusing. The anthropologist ended up having a nervous breakdown.

This shows the importance of having a good methodological insight when gathering information. Certain rules must be standard to ensure that the data are not biased. To achieve maximum objectivity I tried to get a whole range of opinions.

When gathering information a number of techniques were used. Interviews were held, directly or with the help of an interpreter. Participating in the daily activities of research subjects gave a more in-depth view, physically experiencing a part of the daily life. Participation also gave more room for observation. Simply observing, without interfering with questions was also very informative. Using the library and reading newspapers is an established technique for gathering data and was, in time, very rewarding.

I Confirming Data

To check the reliability of the information gathered, a method of triangulation was used. Responses from at least three different independent sources were sought after. The conclusions of the research are based on a combination of views.

It was surprising to hear the views held by different people. For example, when questioning about the position of street children, the response from an Afghan varied greatly from that of a young women working at an aid organization. According to the Afghan, the children worked for a master who was very rich. The masters exploited the children for their own benefit. This probably does happen, though I doubt that the master would drive a Mercedes and live in a big house as claimed. On the other hand, a young expatriate woman had not even noticed that the children did not wear shoes due to their poverty and that they had very little choice in the matter. Had I relied on only one of these sources as an informer, my data would have been seriously unbalanced.

It was therefore necessary to approach and question a number of different sources. The first priority was to ask the children themselves about their conditions. Second, the views of parents, teachers and employers were investigated. A third perspective was gained through inquiring what views other people, those not directly involved with the children in question, had on the plight of working children.

II The Interviews

In structured interviews one approaches the subject with a list of questions, responses are filled in, and one has the information that one requires. This ideal rarely captures the feel of a situation. Emotions and personal opinions of the interviewed are disregarded and replaced by statistics. The interviews which were conducted during the research were structured only on occasion. Most information was gathered in conversations with the people or in open interviews. The main questions relevant to the research were kept central, but ample room was left for the subjects to express their own ideas, even if it did not bear directly upon the matter at hand. This approach resulted in a more trusting and personal relationship between the interviewer and the subjects.

I would like to reinforce the validity of my approach with some examples. Others more experienced than myself have also endorsed such methods. Robert Chambers, working with the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, Brighton, mentions a number of guidelines for doing research. According to Chambers, information is gathered at best while simply talking with individuals about a certain subject. Rather than bombarding the research subjects with a strict list of questions, the theme of the research is freely talked about. Preferably this is done while working alongside the people, taking ones time, not rushing, going at their speed. One should also try to see the subjects at different times and places, not only during the day or at work, but also at night or in a bar. such an approach will give a better overview of the living conditions of the people one is investigating. Also, talking to people at their own favourite places helps the conversation (Chambers 1980, p.6). Simply 'hanging around' and showing that one is 'standing on their side' is also a method suggested by some researchers (Huizer 1989, p.238).

An interview can easily be influenced by the attitude of the interviewer. One thing always to be remembered is that subjects are informants. According to Robert Chambers, seeing the rural people as teachers and assuming that they have valid knowledge unknown to outsiders, together with seeing the world as they do, are two important principles (Chambers 1980, p.7-8).

Another fundamental rule often ignored by researchers, especially expatriates, due to their high salaries, big houses and servants, is not to act as if you are very important. Again Chambers suggests to *'try to avoid the limousine-best-village-garlands-speeches syndrome'* (ibid). Often this opulent attitude results in the researcher only approaching people of importance. For example, while gathering information on farmers, the poorest are ignored whilst the most successful farm is used as a model.

To get a more objective view one has to go beyond what lies in front of one's nose. It is important to go into small alleyways or to places where it is dirtier than the main road. Try to talk to people who seem unimportant, they also have worthwhile contributions to make, and usually have less to hide.

III The Interpreter

When working with an unfamiliar language an interpreter is a necessity. Though very useful at times, they do bring along problems. It is very difficult to concentrate on another person's interests. This is especially true with first time interpreters. Boredom or simple disinterest does not aid the interview. They hurry through the questions and do not translate fully. A very well known problem is that interpreters answer the questions themselves or add to the response of the subject. One notices this when the respondent answers with three or four words and the translation is considerably longer. The reverse is also common, the respondent answers extensively, the translation is a simple yes or no. It is the task of the researcher to keep the interpreter under control.

A nephew of a shop keeper was chosen as translator. He was himself a perfect research subject, a refugee, a former student at Kabul university and now without a job or education possibilities. He lived in the camps and was familiar with English, Pashtu, and Farsi. Jealam proved to be enthusiastic, even if it was only because he could practice his English. He was ± 21 years old and wore a full beard. Being a new refugee he still had some difficulties in adapting to the more conservative atmosphere of Peshawar.

Having many family members with shops, we would meet in the bazaar and from there go out for some interviews. There was one slight problem in this arrangement as it could take some time to find him. While looking for him in the different shops, it was difficult not to be invited to drink tea and to eat food by some acquaintance. This is an offer not easily refused. Thus, if he happened to be in the third shop, it could take at least two hours before we were on our way.

Another disadvantage was the distance of my interpreters home, about an hour by bus. It took careful planning to meet up and be productive.

Interviewing with an interpreter makes everything more formal. A dialogue as described by Joke Schrijvers as *"A reciprocal manner of exchange and communication during the research interaction between the researcher and the subjects of research"* (Schrijvers,1989, P.11), is not easily produced. My handicap of not speaking Farsi or Pashtu hampered my questioning. It is very difficult to carry out casual discussion, less easy to joke, to ask roundabout questions, or to make provocative comments in the hope of getting a reaction. One is restricted by the willingness and skill of the interpreter. Sometimes a question would start off a whole dialogue between the people questioned and my interpreter. There is then very little option but to sit quietly hoping to catch some of what was going on.

Many people did however have a basic knowledge of English. It could take some time, but communication usually progressed relatively well. It did mean sitting and drinking tea for a very long time. Asking a question, making sure that they knew what you meant, and then waiting for the complete answer was a laborious process without an interpreter.

Sitting in a single place for a longer period of time renders one the possibility of simply observing the things going on. One can see the people coming and going, how people greet each other and what relationships people have. Especially in the bazaars it was useful to stay in one place and from there observe the other workshops, avoiding being pulled into one shop or another.

Interviewing in the street was sometimes difficult. People are not used to others showing an interest in their work. They are not sure what you want or how to answer. However, when it became clear that I intended no harm, the people were usually very friendly.

IV The Interviewed

Four main groups of people were approached during this research. First, the children were taken into consideration. Second, the parents of the children were questioned. Another important group that supplied great deal of information were those directly involved with the children as they work and/or learn, employers and teachers. The last category consisted of those working with aid organizations specializing in the plight of children.

Finding a good sample of working children was not much of a problem. Children are everywhere, involved in all daily activities. There was no need for taking a random sample from registration records. Most likely such a sample would have been unreliable, and the children would be next to impossible to find. Secondly, going through any bureaucratic process in Pakistan can best be avoided under all circumstances. If you are of no benefit to the officials, they will do their utmost best to make things difficult. Instead, a 'snowball method' was used. Children selling in the streets or working in shops as well as children of Afghan friends were approached. Becoming a regular customer of some children, buying cigarettes and chewing gum from only a selected number of stands, helped to establish contact.

A total of forty-three children were questioned about their activities in depth. Considerably more were observed and asked short questions. It is difficult to quantify this last group. Children are found in all streets, restaurants and workshops.

The ages of the children varied between six and eighteen. As no one keeps track of birthdays, it is always difficult to determine age precisely. Approximation leads to suggest that ten children were between six and ten years old, nineteen aged between eleven and fourteen and the remaining fourteen, between fifteen and eighteen years of age.

Parents of the children were questioned when possible. In many cases children were in apprenticeship with a parent or uncle. Talking to elders brought a clearer picture of what is thought in general about the work and education of children. Ten fathers were questioned about the activities of their children.

Employers and teachers have direct contact with the children. Employers know for what jobs children are hired, what they earn and some personal details. Shopkeepers or tradesmen were approached in the bazaars. During the interviews the shopkeepers or owners of workshops did not always respond honestly. It was the trick to extract as much information before they realized my intentions. Once these were known a much more positive account was given. It is difficult to quantify the exact number of people that were interviewed, as usually there was more than one person present. Fourteen recorded interviews took place.

The people who were interviewed included silver/gold smiths, stone cutters, antique dealers, carpet merchants, grocery store owners, motorcycle/scooter repair men, fruit vendors, rickshaw repairmen, truck painters, mule drivers, bakers, metal workers, carpenters, hotel managers, street vendors, tailors, bus drivers and tea shops owners.

Teachers, working in schools or in training programmes were asked about their pupils. However, with regular closing of schools due to holidays or days of protest, the interviews with teachers were regrettably limited. It was not possible to speak to more than three fulltime teachers, On all days their schools were closed.

At this point I would like to emphasize my gratitude to Mrs. Nancy H. Dupree. Her kindness and helpful suggestions made my research far more interesting and productive than I could have hoped for. After our first meeting, my schedule was already filled with appointments with directors of a whole range of organisations. Her good humour and high spirit gave me a great deal of support when things were looking less bright.

It was in no way possible to review all the aid-organizations with policies on helping children, but with the help of Mrs. Nancy Dupree a selection of the relevant organizations was made. Eleven organizations were visited and the directors and/or personnel were interviewed. The organizations included Okenden Venture, The Danish Committee for Afghan Aid and Relief (DACAAR), Solidaire Afghanistan S.O.S./PG Belgium, the Afghan Development Association, United Nations Commission for Refugees, the Female Education Programme of the International Rescue Committee (I.R.C.), The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Help the Afghan Foundation, the Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani Welfare Organization, Serving Emergency Relief and Vocational Enterprises (SERVE), and the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees.

At almost all organizations there was a very warm welcome and a willingness to help in the research. Some difficulties did exist in making appointments to go to the camps. Usually the decision to visit a camp was made on the hour and not days in advance.

The following list summarizes the people interviewed.

Subject	Number
Total number of Children	43
Ages of Children	
6-10	10
11-14	19
15-18	14
Number of children in different activities	
Beggar/Scavengers	6
Workshop apprentices	14
Self-employed	8
Jewellery workshop	8
Antique shop	7
Parents	10
Employers	14
Teachers	3
Aid Organizations visited	11

As mentioned, many more people were asked their opinions or questioned briefly. Other methods of gathering data were also implemented extensively.

V Participating and Observing

Within a community totally different from ones own, it is the anthropologists who is the odd one out. In many cases the people speak another langauge, practice a different religion and are even physically dissimilar. The anthropologist has to adapt. In no circumstances can he expect that others will conform to his ideas and beliefs. To win trust and acceptance it is necessary to try and understand how people live, and if not adapting, at least to fully respect the customs of these people.

Peshawar is not a place frequented by tourists. The old city is even avoided by most of the foreigners. I met a number of individuals, who having been in the Peshawar area for several months, had never visited the old city. A Dutch researcher who appraised himself as one of the experts on Pakistan refused to give me a lift into town because it

was too late in the evening (too dangerous perhaps). Instead, he dropped me off on the main road so I could catch one of the few buses travelling at night. This is mentioned not out of annoyance, but to show how people are frightened by ignorance. At no point was there any form of aggression directed towards me or did I feel threatened while in the old city. Even walking late at night in almost deserted streets was not a problem.

A lack of foreigners and previous researchers kept me from the embarrassing incidents faced by some anthropologists in traditional research areas. As the Mohawk Indian asked the anthropologist requesting an interview "Is it for your Masters or Phd thesis?" As soon as it became clear that I felt at home people became very open

In Peshawar it is advisable to blend in with the local population, especially when conducting research in the old city. After two weeks of braving the bazaars in jeans and western shirts, the purchasing of two drab coloured shawar-kamiz outfits seemed a very good idea. Western clothes attract too much attention, making it impossible to walk freely into side streets and alleyways. People living in the area can not imagine that one finds their little streets interesting or even beautiful. They are determined to 'help' you back to the main road.

Simply walking around and looking proved to be a valuable technique for gathering information. Wearing local dress I entered into all kinds of little streets and alleys, choosing a different route home almost every time. It is useful to look behind the scenes, seeing where people live and not only the busy sections of town. This is how the places were discovered where the many traction animals were kept overnight in the city, and where all the old wooden structures of torn down buildings were ordered and sold. One gets to know the feel of a city when walking through back-streets. It is very unlike taking a car or rickshaw to go from one place to the next.

By walking along these roads it became clear that children are involved in every aspect of life. Everywhere there are children integrated into the daily activities, in the workshops, in the tea houses and in the streets selling their goods. Others are playing, going to and from school, or just minding their own business, sitting on a rock watching the world go by. The sheer number of children becomes apparent when one returns home to the west. Here the average two child family makes it seem as if there are no children at all.

In the bazaar of Andershier I always felt welcome. As a potential customer, and later as a regular visitor, I was treated politely, the shop owners taking the time to talk. Two shops were visited regularly and many more less often. Visits consisted of spending many hours talking, sitting, drinking tea and smoking the occasional cigarette. These conversations gave a good insight into the workings of the local economy, the workings of credit and the internal rivalry within the bazaar.

Buying a motorcycle, at an ingenious moment of stupidity, gave me ample opportunity to visit motorcycle repair shops. This sad story of personal humiliation is exemplified in one of the five cases.

Using local public transport, eating at the same restaurants and buying at the same shops as Afghans and Pakistanis, can give good insight into the daily life. This perspicacity, feeling how the people conduct with simple daily activities, can broaden ones understanding of the situation at large. This will in practice be very rewarding when the local population sees that your interest in their community is not accompanied by persistent criticism.

VI Crisis during research

In the middle of my research, in the beginning of January, I panicked. The feeling that, so far, no tangible information had been gathered started to preoccupy my mind. Having interviewed all kinds of people on the street and in the bazaars, but no one with 'true expertise' on the subject, gave me the fearful sensation of not getting to the truth. Someone had to found who could tell me exactly what children were doing and how they managed to cope in such difficult circumstances and so forth. I had fallen into what I now call a **mid-research crisis**.

Trying to calm my nerves a new publication on social research "Battlefields of Knowledge" edited by Norman and Ann Long was taken off the shelf, and lo and behold, an article describing precisely the symptoms of my anxiety. The article, by Pieter de Vries, 'A Research Journey', explained how the time scarcity factor (of time and access) starts to worry the researcher. There is a growing necessity to gather more information and interviewing people who seem at that moment to be key informers (de Vries 1992, p.73). Of course there are no single key informers, all have their own view on the situation.

This fear of not having enough or accurate information can also push someone into one of the most productive periods of the research (ibid). It did indeed drive me to do more research in the library and to re-examine some of the data. Knowing that other researchers had faced similar problems, eased the tension and stimulated the continuing research.

VII Analyzing the Data

When gathering information one must be sure to utilize the data to the full. At first the intention was to write down all the responses during the interview. This plan proved to be too ambitious. Not only is it quite impossible to write at this speed, but it also distracts one from the conversation that is going on. It was also not appropriate when interviewing in shops and workshops. People are constantly being interrupted by customers and other guests. It was better to ask as many questions and, when there was time, taking down short notes, using key words and phrases.

Back in the hotel the notes were worked out to an extended form, giving personal opinions on what was said. A diary was also kept in the first couple of weeks, slowly being integrated into the research notes as daily occurrences and research data began to take on similar lines.

Before the research began, it was proposed to combine the data from the field with other information resources. By integrating different sources of information it was the intention to put the situation of Afghan refugee children in perspective, using examples and references from around the world. It is hoped that in this manner the plight of Afghan refugee children becomes clear and understandable to the reader.

On the whole I feel very comfortable with the information that was gathered. Just being present and involving oneself in such a society is rewarding in itself, adding significantly to ones life experiences. Albeit that at some points during the research I was unsure where the research was leading and had my doubts on the credibility of my information, in the long run I am satisfied. I hope that the reader will also find the information presented in this paper interesting and useful for his or her purpose.

Due to cultural restrictions, observing the activities of girls at close range was next to impossible. Information on the activities of female children was therefore, with some exceptions, gathered indirectly.

This paper consists of six chapters. Chapter One contains a detailed description of the research location, telling of the physical surroundings in which the activities of Afghan refugee children were observed.

In Chapter Two, Afghan refugee children are defined. International definitions of refugees and refugee children are enhanced by a more sociological discussion. As international definitions of children do not always correspond with traditional views, the legal definition is followed by an Afghan perspective on childhood.

The methodology used in gathering the information is presented in Chapter Three. The difficulties in interviewing, the methods for observing daily activities, as well as the problems faced by the researcher are recounted. The research population is described and quantified.

Chapter Four examines the education of Afghan children before the war as well as the educational choices available for the refugees. Although there was a significant increase in the demand for education in rural Afghanistan, this development was halted and even reversed as a result of the war and refugee crisis. A special paragraph is devoted to educational difficulties encountered by girls. Some of the programmes of aid organizations that are relevant to education and training of the refugee children are described.

Chapter Five contains five case studies. Each is representative of a number of working children. Case One examines the ultra-poor beggar scavengers. Case Two looks at the working conditions of apprentices in motorcycle repair shops. Case Three is a description of children in two self-employing enterprises, two mule drivers and a fruitsellers. Apprenticeships at a lapis-lazuli workshop and a jewellery maker form the basis for Case Four. Case Five, a son of an antique dealer and his cousin show the need for learning a trade. The fact that Afghans attach great importance to having their children learn a skill, with which they can directly generate an income, is exemplified by a traditional Afghan story at the end of this chapter.

Chapter Six refocusses the attention on the central theme of work and education. A number of issues that complicate the promotion of formal education among refugee children are explained. As a concluding statement some suggestions on improving the impact of developmental strategies are made.

Two unattached Appendixes that extensively cover two points relevant to the Afghan refugee situation are available. In Appendix I, an historical background of the Afghan war and the refugee crisis is presented. It includes a sketch of the political/military wrangling that is still continuing today. A detailed description of the living conditions of refugees, as well as the problems faced by returning refugees, is given in Appendix II. If the Appendixes are not included with this copy, they can be requested from the author.



Young boy with two camels in Ghazni, Afghanistan 1976.
(photo: N. van Oudenhoven)



Mule driver on his way to a
building site, Peshawar, 1993.



Afghan Truck in Ghazni, 1976
(photo: N. van Oudenhoven)

Chapter Four

The Education of Afghan Children

Education for the majority of Afghans was, and still is, a process of socialization. The children are taught the customs and values necessary to become worthy members of society. The girls learn the skills needed as a wife and a mother, just as boys learn the ways of men. Formal education was never considered important in rural Afghanistan, with only religious teaching as an exception. The traditional views were changing in the years before the war, as people began to see the benefits of formal schooling.

With the war, education was severely disrupted. The lack of facilities in the refugee camps made it physically impossible for thousands of children to continue their schooling. Furthermore, social pressures, generated by anxiety, stifled the educational progress. The desire for stability induced social and religious conservatism within the refugee community. The importance of formal education tended to regress.

In the following chapter education of Afghan children is discussed. The two main questions are: What are the development expectations of children in Afghan society?; and what are the possibilities for their development within the refugee situation.

I Traditional views on Education in Afghanistan

Traditional education consists of conveying the knowledge from the elders to the younger generation, from mother to daughter and from father to son. Children learn the tasks directly by copying their elders and by doing them. Girls fetch water, take care of younger siblings and help their mother with simple tasks in the kitchen or cooking area. Boys grow up learning the tasks and behaviour of men. At an early age they learn how to work in the fields, tend the animals, and maintain the irrigation canals. Children from artisan families learn the crafts of their parents.

Girls

Before reaching 10 years of age girls will have learned how to grind corn, fetch water, cook, sew, gossip and other skills necessary to become a good wife and mother. Mothers and daughters prepare the food, take care of young children, and perform other activities attributed to women (L. Dupree 1973, p.198).

Traditionally, women shear sheep, clean and spin wool and pick fruit, preparing and preserving it for the winter months. Harvesting the fields is a shared activity of both men and women. Girls follow their mothers in the activities. Only in their young years will they do as boys, helping to herd cattle and taking care of the animals outside the household, At puberty or before, girls are restricted to the family living quarters.

Girls marry between the ages of 15 and 17 and become the founder of a new family. Through her children she can rise in status within the family as well as in society. Having sons will enable her to achieve a position of power. As a mother-in-law she will be able to influence both her sons and her daughters-in-law (Boesen 1988, p.44).

Girls are taught the skills of traditional crafts that are practised by the older female members of their household. Some groups are especially skilled in carpet weaving and embroidery. Learning to weave can start at a very young age, with first attempts made on a small toy loom (Thompson 1988 p.51). When they have acquired enough skill the little girls join their mothers and older sisters on the larger looms, learning the intrinsic patterns as they work. By the time they are in their teens, they have become skilled weavers. Preparing wool, spinning and constructing the loom are other necessary skills (ibid). Girls with such skills are highly praised and are very desirable wives.

Boys

Young boys start helping in the fields at a very early age. They learn how to cultivate, tend the animals and maintain the land (Boesen 1988, p.45). Small boys carrying a big stick, herding a number of large buffaloes or mules, are a common sight. Boys will also learn how to shoot and use a gun. During the war many young boys joined in the fighting, trading their child activities for an early adulthood.

Male family members have more room to manoeuvre then their female counterparts. They have the freedom to seek employment outside the household. Men and boys work as day labourers on plantations or building sites, are engaged in the markets as tradesmen, have their own shop or work in the factories. In the bazaars men and boys manufacture a vast range of articles, shoes and buckets from old rubber tires and beautifully worked jewellery.

Boys from the artisan families learn the skills of their fathers or family members. In general boys are seen doing the same as older men, but with less skill and strength and under the watchful eye of their elders. The younger craftsmen carefully watch the elders in every step of the production procedure.

In the bazaars of Afghanistan most shop owners had one or more apprentices working in their shop. Preferably a relative was chosen, but non-related apprentices were also common. The apprentices worked unpaid but received food, clothing, and sometimes lodging and a bit of pocket money. After finishing the training some apprentices would be hired by their masters or, if and when they had saved enough money, would set up their own shop (Charpentier p.66, 1972). This same system is today still prominent in Afghanistan and among the refugees.

Religious and Traditional learning

Grandparents, older uncles and aunts are responsible for passing on the history of a community. As Louis Dupree notes; the elders of the society are seen as the 'encyclopedia' of the society, holding the accumulated knowledge of the group. The children's parents are the producing generation and do not have the time to teach the non-material aspects of culture. '*The grandparents pass on their knowledge to the young in the verbal, folk traditions of Afghanistan*' (Dupree 1973, p. 196).

For centuries religious teaching was the only valued type of formal education for the common population in Afghanistan. A member of a poorer family could only achieve a higher status by becoming a priest or religious scholar (Majrooh 1988, p.80). Madrassas, or religious schools, were situated in all main cities. Students travelled far to those schools with reputable teachers. Madrassas were not attended by girls. The master and students were supported financially by the community.

In the early periods of Islam, centres of great learning were created. These centres contributed significantly to the development of science and arts. However, a growing opposition among the religious scholars towards the rational sciences and philosophy, fostered the sole teaching of religion. The teaching became more and more static, consisting only of repetition of known texts, without discussion of basic problems. Learning was no longer a creative process but only an acquisition of established knowledge (op.cit. p.81).

According to Majrooh, the religious teaching in Afghanistan was at its lowest intellectual level in the beginning of the 20th century. Religious texts were not even studied in their original form, but through commentaries, and even commentaries on commentaries, on the original texts. Arabic, the language of the Koran, was studied in such a way that it was of no use to the student. Grammatical rules were thought to have value by themselves. Students were not taught how to apply them. A student was thus not capable of constructing or understanding an Arabic text. For sake of argument questions and answers were clearly laid down. One had only to memorize the right responses to standard questions in order to succeed in argument (ibid).

Presently, smaller Mosque schools exist in some villages and children are taught the Koran. In these schools the Mullah teaches the boys and older women teach the girls. Teaching in these schools rarely includes other forms of education.

II Formal Education in Afghanistan

Formal education -reading, writing, arithmetic, etc.- has always been limited in Afghanistan. Only about 11 percent of the population is literate, of which the majority is male. Under the Afghan constitution education is compulsory and free. Resources, be they financial, the facilities or the teachers to implement universal education have, however, never been fully available (L.Dupree, 1973, p.597)

In rural Afghanistan there were only a few schools, and where they existed teachers were poorly educated and underpaid. Before the war, however, the interest in learning was rapidly increasing; that after a long period of convincing the people of its benefits. This growing interest is evident from the following table.

Changes in Education in Afghanistan

Year	Institutions	Students	Teachers
1930	13	1,590	53
1940	324	60,000	1,990
1956	806	126,092	---
1967	2,567	497,911	12,461
1971	3,971	719,744	19,933
1976	4,006	928,066	26,687

(Ghani 1990, p.159)

The figures above show the growth in the number of children going to school. Nonetheless, the discrepancy between boys and girls has to be highlighted. In 1976 the total amount of students in school was 928,066. Of this total, 804,093 were boys while only 123,973 we

re girls. There were also a considerably higher number of male teachers, 22,227, compared to the 4,460 female teachers. As for the schools, the 3,503 boys' schools greatly outnumbered the 503 schools for girls.

The place where this gender gap was less expressive, was the capital city, Kabul. The difference with the rest of the country is clearly seen in the following table.

Education in Kabul

	Male	Female
Number of Schools	71	50
Number of Students	89,009	48,664
Number of Teachers	1,827	2,805[1]

(ibid, p.160)

Kabul also housed the only university in the country. Jalalabad housed a medical college with plans to become the second university. Many of the faculties had partnerships with other countries, including the United States, Germany, Egypt and France. The USSR financed the building and the training of teachers for the Kabul Polytechnic. During the war with the Soviet Union the education was almost entirely dependent on the Soviet Union for educational aid. Foreign teachers were mostly Russian or East German.

III Formal Education of Refugee Children

Over half the population in the camps consist of children. Although there are some schools in the camps they do not meet the needs of 1.5 million children. Development workers estimate that 5 to 6 percent of children go to school at a single time[2]. Little more than half of the refugee children have attended school or some other form of education at one time or another. Differences between the sexes is however, very significant. In contrast to the 50% of boys, only 4% of girls can claim to have gone to school.

During my research I tried a number of times to visit a camp school. On all days, a total of four, the schools were closed due to some event. Once it was the day before exams, on the other three it was due to political demonstrations, a common occurrence. This alone says something about the regularity of schooling.

According to Ali Gohar, Provincial Coordinator of the Social Welfare department at the Commission for Afghan Refugees, there are presently 250 primary and middle schools in the Peshawar camp area. High schools number between 10-20. Many of these schools are run by Pakistanis and are teaching in Urdu. The reason being that the children live in Pakistan and should learn its customs and language. The presented view of Pakistani officials is that the students are learning about their own Afghan culture as well. This is disputed by some Afghans, who claim that the Pakistan government wishes all Afghans to learn Urdu and forget Afghan culture. Trying to determine exactly the ratio of schools teaching in Urdu, Farsi or Pashtu is difficult.

Afghan intellectuals, such as the late Professor Majrooh[3], also blamed the exiled leaders of Afghan parties in Pakistan for the deterioration of child education. The religious dimension of the war has been emphasized at the expense of its national character (Hyman, 1988, p.89). This has gone to such an extent that the key subject, Afghan history, is not taught in most Afghan refugee schools. A danger exists that the children will forget their heritage. Quoting Professor Majrooh; "*If the situation remains as it is. Afghan children born in the refugee camps will not know who they are. They will have no knowledge about their country, which they will not have seen, they will have no feeling for their past and their culture about which they will not have learned anything*" (op.cit. p.90).

Most camp schools are run by different religious groups or parties. One is able to attend only if one has a party card stating ones loyalty. A good example is the Said Jamal Din Afghan Secondary School, a very large school that is attended by students from all refugee camps. It is controlled by the Hezbi-Islami faction, and members are restricted to supporters of this political faction. Hezbi-Islami has also set up a University in the camps, supposedly with the most modern equipment available. These facilities are also available to party members only. It was my understanding that girls did not attend either institution.

IV Difficulties in the Formal Education of Refugee Girls

It is important to mention the special case of girls. Many forces encumber their education. The education of girls has always been difficult among Afghans, an attitude that has not improved but rather worsened with the refugee crisis. Traditional attitudes towards educating girls are a most important restrictive factor. Suspicion of foreign institutions is another. Girls disappear from the streets when they reach an age of about twelve, sometimes even before. Few girls can receive anything more than primary schooling. Girls who continue schooling are faced with the lack of facilities.

In the refugee camps, the stricter adaptation of the Shari'at (Islamic law) has limited women's access to education. Even if teachers are female, and schools are separate, resistance is still strong. Preparation to work anywhere except the home is inconceivable. Religious conservatives pronounce the schools as seats of moral corruption, accusing the attending girls and their male guardians of sin (N. Dupree. 1992, p.5). Only a good Islamic background is necessary, so that the women can carry out their religious duties. This attitude has consolidated significantly due to the refugee crisis.

In my one and only interview with an Afghan woman of my age, I received some information on the educational facilities of young Afghan women. It was a surprise to learn that there are no facilities for the higher education of young women. There was some talk of a women's university being set in Hyatabad, just outside Peshawar, but nothing of the kind was functioning during my visit.

The only option open to women interested in higher education is to follow one of the different training programs offered by various aid organizations. An example hereof is the teacher training course run by the International Rescue Committee. Here women are trained to set up a kindergarten or pre-school. In spite of these training courses the success rate of women finding work is not very high. Of the 72 students of this training course only 22 had succeeded in finding work. The resistance of religious leaders seemed to be the main cause. This leaves women to wonder around from one course to another, hoping, in the end, to find work at some development organization [4].

Not following formal education, but learning traditional skills, girls can join one of the training courses for traditional skills run by aid organizations. The aid organizations do not necessarily teach the girls how to weave and embroider, but aid in the selling of these goods while at the same time holding to a strict quality control.

V Alternative Choices for Education

With the strong traditional views on education and the few facilities available it is not surprising that many Afghan refugee families have chosen to educate their children as has been done for generations. The precarious situation has also necessitated children to mature at an early age. Parents are teaching the skills with which they are familiar so that the children may fend for themselves.

Girls still follow the activities of the mother at home. However, within the refugee camps the situation is not as it was. There is no land and animals are not abundant. In response, traditional female roles have been marginalized. On the other hand, with many men at work in distant places or fighting in the war, women have assumed more responsibilities, including raising children on their own (N.H. Dupree 1992, p.3). Within the refugee camps, girls and women do try to uphold their traditional roles when generating an income. Handicrafts, such as embroidery work, spinning wool, weaving carpets, and cooking and selling food, are the main sources of extra income.

When explaining the situation of girls and women, it is important to mention the difference between the camps and home villages. In Afghan and Pakistani society women are held in high esteem. As a result they are kept at home or in the close vicinity. In the camps there are many people from different parts of Afghanistan, with different ethnic backgrounds. For the inhabitants this means less security, not the trustworthy situation of a home village. Women have thus been more constrained in their activities than would normally be the case (op.cit. P.3,).

Many boys are taken by their fathers to find a place for apprenticeship in the city. Some children find a place where they can learn on the job, usually at a relative's shop. Here they can learn how to work with wood, sew clothes or learn how to bargain and trade. If lucky, the children can learn a skill by working as an apprentice, but many suffer the fate of having to look for unskilled jobs. They have little opportunity to gain a worthwhile education.

Boys are found working as shoe-shiners, or water carriers; they make the tea in little shops, clean bird cages, and sell various articles ranging from lottery tickets to toothpaste from their little stalls or boxes they carry along. In many cases the children are expected to earn at least part of their upkeep and, as soon as possible, to contribute to the family income.

Most of these activities take place in the informal sector, that part of the economy not officially registered. The businesses involved usually consist of small enterprises engaged in industry, trade, and services.

During the war many boys went off to fight in Afghanistan. They answered to the tradition that equates a man to any male that can carry a gun. Young boys were pushed to adulthood. They joined the different Mujahedin groups that corresponded to their religious beliefs and/or ethnic/regional backgrounds. Many died or were wounded. Today many boys are still working as soldiers or guards. Retraining these boys will be a major problem when peace returns to Afghanistan. The lasting of peace might actually depend on it.

It is fair to say that, had the war not erupted, many of the children would now be going to school. There would have been no need for the young to take on adult responsibilities.

VI Education through Development Programmes

In the Peshawar area a number of aid organization are involved with the development of the refugee children through educational programmes. Some finance formal schooling, while others offer training programmes that integrate vocational training and formal schooling.

It is the policy of many donor organizations that children must have a formal schooling. There were a number of times that this policy was forcefully asserted when the validity of such policies were questioned. At one point an Afghan aid worker suggested that a girl should take part in an income generation project. A representative of a powerful funding agency turned down the request because the girl was young enough to go to school. The result, the girl stays home.

As noted above, there are numerous difficulties that limit the success of such educational initiatives. Those programmes that seemed to be of relevance to the Afghan population, were those that guaranteed an income. Formal schooling is often of secondary importance. This view was supported by a number of Afghans working in aid organizations as well as the children involved.

A very interesting project is the Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani Organization (SJAWO). Its director, Gholam Dastagir, an ex-Mujahedin leader, had taken it upon himself to give an education and training to young men (boys) who had been injured and permanently handicapped during the war. The boys are taught skills such as leather work, the making of aluminium household articles and carpet weaving. Besides this, the boys had literacy class every day.

This project is a good example of integrating vocational training and formal schooling. It was also evident that the status of the director, a former commander, played an important part in generating mutual respect between him and the students. He was doing this for the good of the children who had fought in the same. I should mention that there were no new and expensive four-wheel drive vehicles in the driveway, very noticeable compared to other organizations.

Solidarité Afghanistan-SOS/PG*Belgium, is a non-governmental organization that provides assistance with extensive training programmes. The organization runs a vocational training/income generation programme (AYSAR). The main beneficiaries are young Afghans, both male and female, between fifteen and twenty years of age. Besides young Afghans, twenty-five percent of the candidates are from vulnerable groups such as widows, orphans and disabled of all ages.

The programme's immediate objective is to train young Afghans by apprenticeship in one of the 25 trades on offer. This is achieved by placing students into micro-enterprises. These micro-enterprises are then supported by the provision of a tool kit to the master and a number of credit facilities. The students, as well as the masters, are inspected twice a week by a controller. Activities include among others, wood work, motorcycle repair, embroidery (for girls), radio repair and even religious training in a Mosque.

The graduates of a period of apprenticeship, which can last from six to eighteen months depending on the trade, receive a tool kit which aids their insertion into the labour market. Many also find employment with their former masters. This formula seems to be very satisfactory for all parties involved. The apprentices interviewed seemed content and the same can be said of the masters. The overall result is that 85% of the graduated trainees have been inserted into the local market.

A number of agencies have as one of their objectives to give training and provide income generation activities. Okeden Venture, DACAAR (the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees), SERVE (Serving Emergency Relief and Vocational Enterprises), and ADA (Afghan Development Agency), all have training programmes that include young people as well as adults. The organizations operate a number of training programmes. DACAAR has mobile teams that teach women embroidery and new designs as well as looking after quality control. SERVE has trained over 133 boys in carpet weaving and now provides a marketing service to its trainees[5]. Okeden Venture is the largest producer of Afghan handicrafts in Pakistan, employing over 2,700 people.

The overriding strategy is to have people produce goods that are to be exported, sold to the local market, or ordered by the UNHCR (tarpaulins and quilts). Especially the focus on the export market has resulted in the fact that many of the products lack the originality of many traditional handicrafts. However, in the modern market uniformity is a must. If large scale orders are to met, the products cannot deviate from the examples in the Agency's catalogue.

All development agencies have in common that they provide 'space' (read energy, funds, staff, resources) to the youngsters they serve. Space is a commodity that refugees do not have. The organization all operate a local outlet where the products are sold. The prices are set and reasonable. The local shops are less expensive, but one always has to bargain. It is understandable that most of the agency's customers are westerners or affluent Pakistanis.

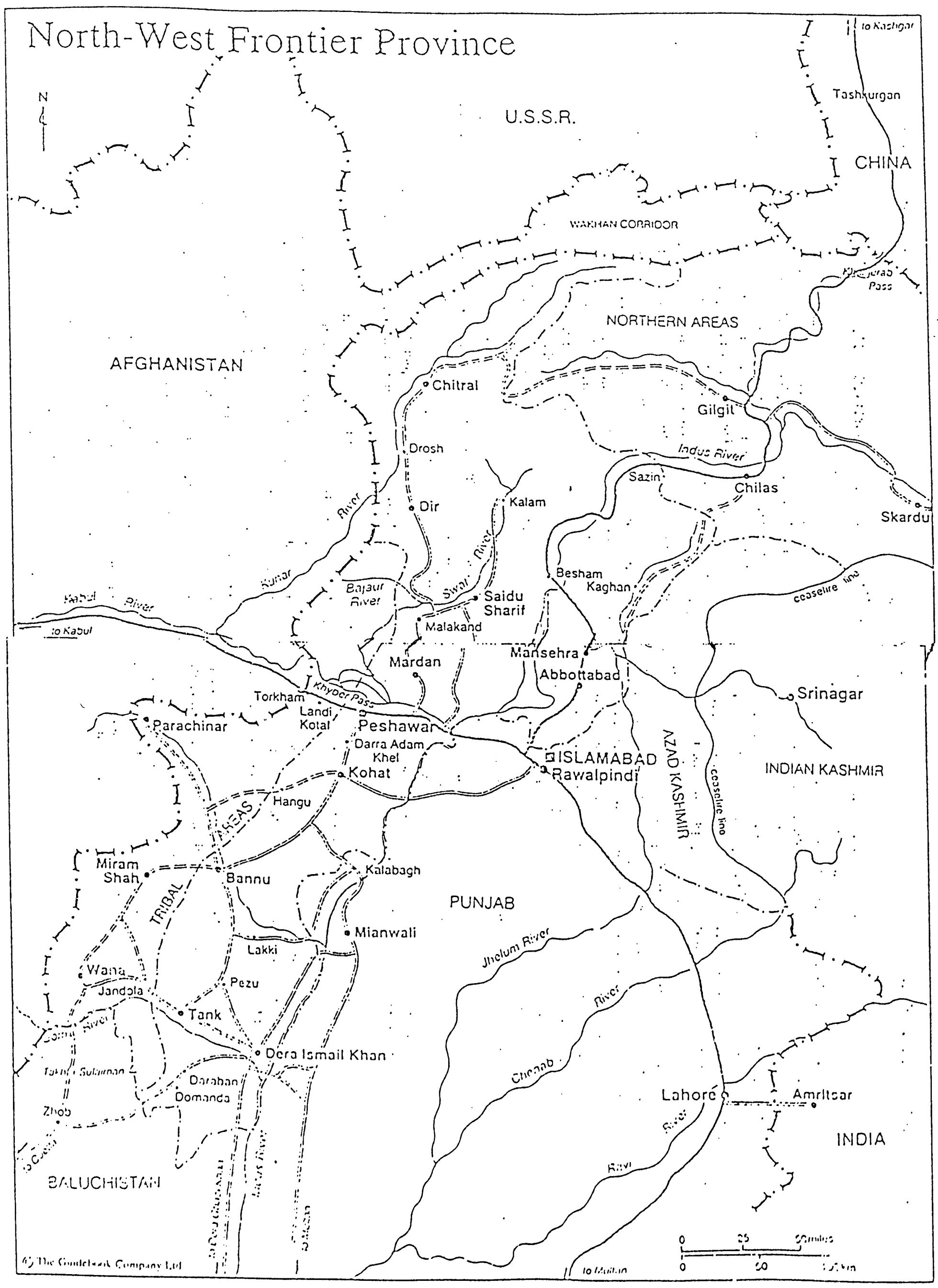
Another element that these agencies offer is less tangible and may have to do with validating the work of local groups. Working in relation to the agencies gives refugee groups recognition and protection, demonstrating that refugees are not a written-off group.

VII Education of Refugee Children: a Summary

If one takes a closer look at the formal education of refugee children, it becomes obvious that there are numerous difficulties to overcome. The facilities that are available for formal education are scarce. The schools that do exist are either Pakistani run or have been set up by a political faction.

Social pressure has pushed children into adulthood faster. Boys are to work as soon as they are able, girls are married at a younger age. Female education has only deteriorated during the refugee crisis, the modest gains made in the years before the war were quickly swept away by fundamentalist forces proclaiming all such actions as un-Islamic.

It is the intention of this paper to show what options are open for Afghan refugee children. Their working environment and the possibilities for gaining a useful education in the workplaces are thoroughly examined. It is hoped that the reader will gain some insight into the situation in which the children find themselves, as they are faced by hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugee children and millions in similar conditions around the world.





Two Kutchi children outside Kabul, Afghanistan 1976
(photo: N. van Oudenhoven)



Two afghan children selling cigarettes, Kabul, Afghanistan 1976.
(photo: Nico van Oudenhoven)



Afghan primary school, Afghanistan 1977
(photo: N. van Oudenhoven)

While some young Afghans are successfully receiving vocational training, there is still a predominant attitude in the development world that children should be going to school first. However, as seen previously, numerous factors hinder the formal education of children. Not only are there few facilities available, few schools and teachers, but within the refugee population there is a strong conviction that formal education is not the answer to their problems. The main concern of the refugees is to find stability for themselves and for the children, and they find this in their own, proven traditions. If an educational programme is to be successful, it must take this view into consideration.

Thus it could be argued that programmes responding to the immediate needs of the people concerned should be endorsed, even if they run counter to the set of standard beliefs and concepts found in national development plans and in the blue prints of development organizations. It may, therefore, be perfectly justifiable to forego 'education' and address first the refugees' wish to make an income. Formal education should then wait until conditions have improved.

In the near future on of the biggest challenges for those development organizations implementing educational/training programmes, will be to reintegrate young soldiers into normal society. Thousand of teen-age boys have been active in the war. Often they know nothing but how to hold a weapon and how to use it. It is important that they are re-educated in such a way that they will not resort to violence. A meaningful training programme, that teaches respectable skills and can generate a satisfactory income in the future, must be designed.

Notes:

[1] Not a statistical error

[2] This figure was given by Michael Stone, Director of Okenden Venture. The organization runs a handicraft training course, maintains schools, etc.

[3] Professor S.B. Majrooh was the former Dean of Kabul University. Quotations are from the book 'The Sovietization of Afghanistan', Afghan Jihad Works Translation Centre, Peshawar, edited by Dr. Majrooh and Prof. S.M.Y. Elmi.

[4] It should be noted that the women involved at the I.R.C. training programmes were not of the poorer families. Not in any case would they have been able to finish 12 years of schooling required to attend.

[5] A short comment on SERVE. The organization is very Christian and has been blamed for demanding that Afghan Muslim children learn the bible in return for the support given.

Chapter Five

Five Case Studies

The following are five case studies which exemplify work and education of working children from different levels of society. The cases are categorized according to the Poverty model of J. Remeny, ranging from the vulnerable poor, who have very little opportunities to improve their situation, to the near poor, who, despite their relative high income, are still restricted in their choices (Remeny 1991)[1]. The cases serve as an illustration of the activities of working children and the education they might enjoy.

To strengthen the argument that learning a skill is of great importance to the Afghans, a traditional Afghan story demonstrating this view, concludes this chapter.

I Beggar/Scavengers

Beggar/scavengers are a group of vulnerable poor. They live on a day to day basis, dependent on hand-outs and on the luck they may find something of value. Six boys were interviewed extensively, and others were asked shorter questions. The abundance of such children provided ample opportunity to observe their daily activities.

In and around Peshawar there are a number of kids who live as beggar/scavengers. They roam in the different residential areas looking for useful, thrown away objects. I studied a number of these individuals, trying to piece together a general story on their activities. The main problem in finding out in depth a beggar/scavenger's life-cycle was the difficulty of meeting the same child more than one or two times. Unlike the children selling goods in stalls, this group moved around continuously. The information gathered thus consists of interviews with six different children, ten shorter conversations and observations on many more. An exact number of children observed is difficult to estimate as they are abundant in all parts of the city. Residents were also asked how they perceived the children, how they related to them. The following is thus a collection of data; responses of people living in the area as well as from the children involved.

The children that fall into this group are both boys and girls. Boys are hardly ever older than fourteen and some are as young as five or six. Girls disappear around the age of ten, only to reappear when they have reached an elderly age. One sees these beggar/ scavengers in every area of Peshawar, in the old city, in the middle class residential areas and in the rich sections of town. The first time I was in University town, looking for the office of my counsellor in the field, a little boy ran up to me, waving and saying 'chetour-asti, chetour-asti' or 'How are you?, How are you?'. Later I found that this boy was called Amin. He was one of the few that I repeatedly saw, also in combination with my expatriate friends. After observing the activities of numerous beggar boys, the case of Amin proved representative for almost all the other beggar/scavenger boys around.

Amin came from the refugee camp close to University town and roamed around University town quite regularly. Judging from his size he must have been around ten. He was never wearing shoes, but was always dressed in a dirty grey Shawar-Kamiz. In the

sack he carried in his hand or across his shoulder, he kept the goods collected during the day. He either walked the street on his own or with two of his friends, who were about the same age. Amin had never gone to school and neither had any of his friends or his brothers. His family was obviously poor and had no alternative but to send him and his brothers out to search for goods.

Other children from Kutchi (nomad) families, competed with the refugee children. Accompanying sheep or goats, they scavenge through rubbish. The girls were mostly from this group. With their bright eyes and audacious attitude they could easily extract small sums of money from the unwary foreigner.

At this point I would like to comment on the life cycle of nomadic and agricultural people of Afghanistan. Traditionally children scavenged for food for the animals. It is part of their upbringing and part of the production process. Most children witnessed are not the ones sleeping in the street and living a life of pure misery, surrounded by drugs and prostitution. Even in the old city this was not the case. Many have a family to whom they can return and where they are taken care of.

However, the children are not what we would call 'well off'. They live at a level of subsistence, dependent on what they can find. Many do not wear shoes. Even in the cold months they walk through the dirty streets and garbage bare-foot. The clothing they wear is old and torn. In the cold some wear jackets, others layers of shirts or a pullover. Over their shoulder they carry a bag of canvas or plastic, into which are thrown all the useful things they find. Most of the children do not look malnourished, but there are those exceptions which make one realize that this life is in no way a game.

Even in the short time of the research I found a noticeable variation in the attitude of children in different sections of town. In the old city the children were tougher than those in University town. They looked grimier and were not as eager in directly approaching people for money. Even when dressed in European clothes I was seldom confronted. These city children were also the only ones that carried weapons. This usually consisted of a bolt or sparkplug on a string or wire, a weapon that can be spun at high speed and smashed against the intended victim, be it dog or aggressive human. The children had adapted to the town situation, an alltogether more combative way of life.

When walking through the normal residential areas of the city, outside the busy business section, the children searching through the garbage were no longer armed. Walking along the streets they simply gathered what they could find, asking some passers-by for money.

Scavenging consists of collecting anything that might prove useful in some way, either directly or by exchanging it for money. Examples of what is collected are; old paper for recycling or for fuel; pieces of wood for building materials or fuel, bits of string, empty cans, food and garden wastage for fodder and clothing for wear or tear.

Where does all this rubbish come from? In University town where I observed these children the most, it was from the rich households, where luxury permits more exuberant wastage. As wonderful as this might sound to those who have seen the variety of items

found on garbage day in the west, the wastage in Peshawar is disappointing. The thrown-away goods are first re-selected by the household staff before being disposed of. Cook, servant, and guard always have first choice in such matters. For a couple of Rupees they too can sell old bottles and garden waste. It was to the surprise of some friends, that after returning from a two week vacation, the gardener had thoroughly, with the skill of a master, significantly pruned all the larger flora. Apparently fodder and firewood were in high demand.

Disposed products are therefore seldom of the highest quality. But noting the difference, children are more enthusiastic when a foreigner comes to dump the garbage himself.

In any case, what ever is disposed of is thoroughly searched through by the scavengers, leaving at the end of the day only a small layer of filth, nothing more than a number of orange peals and unidentifiable material. The children take away pieces of paper, bits of string and cloth, scraps of metal, empty bottles (a scarcer product, as the servants remove these to sell on their own account), and anything else that can be used as fuel, fodder, or sold for recycling.

All goods that are collected are taken home and ordered. An older brother or the father takes items for selling or they are used in the household. Sometimes the boys sell the goods by themselves and spend the little money on bread, supplementing what they get at home. Thus it becomes apparent that the children take care of themselves for most of the day.

In combination with searching through the garbage, many children beg as well. On the edge of University town there is a market place where the foreigners and other residents do their shopping. Here we find a whole group of boys, with ages from 7-10, waiting for any rich person to do his or her shopping. Begging for money or for some food, they go from one foreigner to the next and back again. Some work as a team and if one is given something he quickly calls the others who try to get a share. The children will point out your unfairness by giving to one and not the other, working on one's guilt feelings. Children grab onto ones arm, pull sad faces, they truly beg.

Foreigners and other beleaguered individuals have different approaches in confronting the beggars. Some quickly give a rupee to get it over with. This, however, can result in the above mentioned fact that re-enforcements are quickly called in. Some refuse to give money, claiming that it corrupts the children. Alternative things are then given, for example, some food or clothing. One friend of mine sometimes took them for a ride in his car, which they enjoyed very much. This showed a more personal feeling towards the children than just finishing it of with a small 'bribe'.

It would be logical to assume that, when it is difficult to scavenge and beg, these boys might resort to small time thieving. In the newspaper, the Frontier Post, an article on thieving youths described a new method of pick-pocketing that was flourishing in the old city. Noorístani kids, as the children were called, pick-pocketed wallets, but returned drivers licenses and other documents. Their specialty however, lay in their line of defense

when caught. Claiming that the intended victim approached them to commit sodomy, would quickly lead to their release, as no one desires to get involved in such a case (Frontier Post 15 March, 1992).

Observations

Beggar/scavenger children are those coming from the poorest refugee and nomad families. They are usually young children who are not old enough to sell their labour. Their income is dependent on what they might find or what is given to them. What they find or receive is taken home for selling, direct use, fodder or is consumed on the spot. They have very little opportunity to drastically improve their situation and might even have to resort to thieving.

There was no child interviewed who had gone to school or saw the possibility of doing so. Only one child had an older brother who had gone to school for a number of years. It was however unclear for how many years he had done so.

The education that beggar/scavenger children do receive teaches them how to live on the street and cope by any means available. In the hard world in which they live these skills are certainly necessary. I sympathise with their predicament.

It is clear that children falling into this category do not have a choice. The possibilities of developing themselves or improving their overall condition are very limited. Their only options are to beg and scavenge. In developmental terms they are the worst off: all roads to improvement have been blocked. Resources needed to invest in education are not available. Economic investment, i.e. in a small shop, is also impossible due to the minimal financial capacities.

The situation of beggar/scavenger boys can only be corrected if overall development conditions were to change for the better. The refugee situation, and the corresponding problems of displacement and war, offer little room for improvement. Change in the daily routine could risk the loss of income. The children's position as miniature adults and providers of family income is of overriding importance.

II Motorcycle Repair

A number of boys working in motorcycle repairshops are an example of the labouring poor. The job location of the boys is often chosen arbitrarily. Had they not found work at a motorcycle repair shop, work could just as well have been in a wood worker's shop, a tea house, or as a day labourer. Furthermore, although learning does take place, many children are simply exploited for their cheap labour.

Eight boys working in motorcycle shops were interviewed at length, but as with the beggar/scavengers, the great number of similar workshops gave ample opportunity for observation and short questions. Accompanying a field controller of SOS PG-Belgium, gave me the opportunity to visit a whole range of work shops and to interview apprentices doing work ranging from truck painting to radio repair. A total of fourteen apprentices working in such enterprises were interviewed.

In Peshawar there are a great number of motorcycle and scooter repair shops. Buying a motorcycle gave me the opportunity to visit these workshops with a purpose. With some regularity, I might add. The motorcycle broke down so often that I began to recognize Peshawar by the places I had stranded.

Motorcycle workshops are similar in size and appearance. Usually no more than three by five metres in size, oil on the floor, a work bench, a variety of broken motorcycles outside, and a number of employees at work. There is always a master, the owner or manager of the shop who, supposedly, has the knowledge needed for repairing the two wheeled vehicles. Most of the time he is the fatter one sitting on a chair, talking to a friend or customer.

Working under him are a number of older employees. These men have worked with motorcycles for a longer period of time, perhaps as apprentice in the same shop in previous years. These employees, together with the master, attempt to carry out all the truly difficult tasks, such as electric wiring and replacing various engine parts. True employees can make agreements with customers on repairs costs.

In every motorcycle repair shop there are at least two or three apprentices, sometimes as many as five. Apprentices are young boys between the ages of six and eighteen. They are not paid, but receive food, clothing and transport money. They do supposedly, get an education in return for the work they do. Apprentices are often relatives, sons of friends, or boys that have been sent by the poorer families to work.

Watching the many apprentices one can see the different levels of progression in skills they have acquired. The very young do the dirtiest and most simple tasks. They are ordered to clean engine blocks, replace small parts on the motorcycles or anything else that their superiors tell them to do. In many motorcycle repair shops, as well as other engine repair shops, little boys covered with oil and gasoline are common. One wonders about the health risks for someone so young, working in such conditions.

Two workshops were studied in depth, while waiting for the motorcycle to be repaired. The first was in Saddar bazaar, located next to another workshop and a dealer of motorcycle spare parts. The master or owner of the shop was a Pakistani but he employed a number of Afghans. The master was a friendly man and worked himself, his oldest son helping in the administration of his shop. There was one steady employee, and Afghan, and two very young apprentices. In this shop interviews were conducted with the help of the masters eldest son, Ali. Although he was useful, his English being rather good, the answers I received were sometimes biased.

Ali himself was eighteen years old and had finished secondary school. He was now working in his dad's and uncles's shop, in his own words, 'as administrator'. Seeing the shop, and many others like it, one wonders what kind of administration this could be. Seldom are the times when one receives a bill or one notices a bookkeeping in such a shop. However, whatever he did, it gave him enough salary to buy the most expensive motorcycle of the lot.

What interested me more were the two young apprentices of this shop and one from the shop next door. It was especially interesting due to the fact that all three had different backgrounds, The first, Hamidullah, was the son of one of the Afghan employees. According to his father he was about ten years old and that was old enough to learn a trade. He had worked there for two years, but had never gone to school. Asking why this was so, the father responded that it was not necessary, schools were no good. Anyway his younger son would go to school when he was old enough. Was this an example of pleasing the researcher?

The second was another Afghan boy, Raim, the son of a shopkeeper across the street. The father had also seen it fit that his son learn a skill. He was twelve years old and had been working for a year and seemed to be learning quickly. He had gone to school for three years in one of the refugee primary schools. His reason for quitting was that he had to work.

In the shop next door there worked a young Pakistani boy by the name of Abdul. He must have been about eight or nine years old. He looked less healthy than the other two. He had been placed there by his father about six months ago, to learn a skill. It might also have been to guarantee him of food and a place to sleep. According to Ali he came from a poor family living in a small village outside Peshawar. He had never gone to school, his family being too poor and uninterested in formal education.

The work done by all three boys is very simple, the tasks of the two older boys being only slightly more complex. Of course my limited stay in the shop did not give me a full index of all activities, but the basic routine was witnessed and recorded.

The youngest apprentice, Abdul, the poor Pakistani boy, seemed to do the dirtiest jobs in the shop of his master. Always covered in oil, he had to clean engine parts. This consisted of washing them in gasoline and then wiping them with a rag. Sometimes he would be called to help his master, to bring tools or hold a clamp while his master tightened a bolt. When it was time for tea or food for his master, Abdul was the one sent out to get what was needed. I got the impression that he was not treated well, especially when he was slapped in the face for talking back to his master. This maltreatment made me think that boys not from immediate surroundings might be treated worse than locally recruited apprentices, there being no family in the neighbourhood to stop possible abuse. This view was supported by some people in the bazaar[2].

The two older boys carried out more difficult tasks at the time I was present. They worked directly on the engines of scooters and motorcycles, though not on the newer, more expensive models. They were definitely given tasks so that they could practice. Hamidullah, the older of the two, spent a whole afternoon and the next morning trying to fix the starting mechanism of a scooter. He would take the engine block apart, reset the kick-start, put the block back together and try to start the engine. Every time there was, however, still something wrong, either the engine would not start or, if it did, then the kick-start would suddenly hang loose. Once in a while the master would walk over telling him to do this or that and try again.

Raim did a number of different tasks at the times I was there. Besides being sent out to order tea whenever a guest arrived, he also replaced a motorcycle exhaust pipe and cleaned the repaired motorcycles, polishing them with a greasy rag. Another time he replaced lightbulbs and reflectors on my motorcycle.

The work done by the young apprentices is checked by an elder to make sure it has been done correctly.

With time and experience the jobs allocated to apprentices become more complex and less dirty. Replacing kickstands, putting on new brakes, fixing leaking fuel tanks and buying parts in different sections of town becomes part of the job. With more experience the boys are given some income and more responsibility, sometimes left alone in the shop while the owner goes out to visit some friends.

This was apparent in another workshop, located across from the hotel. The owner of the shop is a big man who dresses in a white shawar-kamiz and does not participate in any of the repairs. He is a typical example of a master whose interests in educating his apprentices has been completely lost. Most of the time he sits inside with a number of friends trying to act important.

In this workshop there were two older men, one of whom was active in the repairs, doing the more difficult ones such as wiring and the repairs for important customers. Under the two men worked three boys, of whom one was considerably younger.

Jamal and Osman, respectively seventeen and eighteen, worked at the shop every working day. Jamal, an Afghan refugee, had found work at this shop four years ago. Before, he went to school for six years. Osman was Pakistani, and had been working in this shop, his uncle's, for over five years. They could run the shop by themselves, without the help of the owner. The only reason they needed him was for money to buy the more expensive spare parts. They could carry out most tasks and make decisions on prices for small repairs. For bigger chores, such as in my own case, the owner or the other master was consulted.

The youngest boy, Ahmed, was, according to himself, eleven years old, the shop owner said he was thirteen, personally I believe he was no older than ten (see picture). He was also a distant family member of the owner and had been placed here to help in the shop. He had been working at the shop for eight months. Ahmed would take apart the engine block or chain case and then leave the difficult work to the older boys. As every young boy he was the one fetching the tea and nan (bread) for lunch.

Observations

Boys in the motorcycle repair shops are learning a skill. They get to know how a motorcycle works and how to keep it running. That is, if they are lucky. A good master, who teaches how to best approach a problem, is of vital importance. This is an exception. To put this view into perspective I will need to explain the ordeal I went through in trying to get my own motorcycle repaired.



Autoworkshop in Namic Mundi, Peshawar 1992



Achmed and Jamal at the motorcycle workshop, Peshawar 1992

At first the motorcycle started leaking fuel from the tank. This was kindly repaired at the first mentioned workshop, by the owner, giving me the first opportunity to study the boys. The next day a fuel tube began to leak and the lights refused to work. The fuel tube was easily replaced, but as he had no knowledge of the electrical system, the lights had to be repaired in another shop.

A couple of days later all the oil had leaked out of the engine block through the opening by the kickstand. This brought me to the second repair shop. A ring needed replacing, but this could not be done without breaking the kickstand, someone had apparently welded some parts together that previously could be screwed loose. A new kick-start was put in, and the oil no longer leaked. However, the kickstand that was now in place no longer had any spring left and dangled down onto the road. This called for another look, for free, of course. After repeating the process four times the problem persisted. I settled for a rubber band to keep the kickstand to the side of the bike.

I abandoned this repair shop when the chain case suddenly wound up in the spokes of my rear wheel. The youngest apprentice had been so kind as to tighten the chain and had refastened the case with something resembling a worn out paperclip.

The lighting was a problem that was never overcome. No one was skilled enough to fix electric wiring. The lighting refused to work for anything longer than a five minutes drive. This was sufficient to get outside the relatively well lit centre of town onto the unlit main roads. It is very interesting to drive at night with no foresight of bumps and gaping holes in the road which might lie on your path.

In getting my motorcycle fixed for these and other problems I never once encountered a mechanic who worked structurally on the problem. It seemed to be continuous patchwork, using old parts fixed in some way or another so they could last for another minimal period of time. Old pieces of wire were taped together to make a new one, strips of rubber tire were strapped around exhaust pipes to fill the holes, only to melt in the heat, having to be replaced again and again. It is not only a money problem of not being able to afford the parts. Offers to pay for new parts were ignored. It seemed endemic to the whole system of repair, not only that of motorcycles.

This lack of structure is ubiquitous. For emphasis I give an example of the leaking hotel boiler. Situated on top of the hotel, it consisted of a big metal tank surrounded by a brick wall for insulation. Water started to trickle from under the boiler about a month after my arrival. A week later, a repairman was called to examine the problem. He let all the water gush onto the roof and fixed the hole in the stone wall. This stopped the leakage for one or two days. However, water was still seeping from the metal tank inside the wall, and a heavy dripping soon continued. Again the wall was repaired, and, yes, half a day later a steady flow of water was again coming out from underneath. Every time the repairmen attempted to fix the tank they had emptied the water onto the roof. This resulted in major water damage on the two floors below. Eventually the decision was made to take down the wall and repair the tank inside. The hole was welded and the leaking stopped, I cannot resist mentioning that they also welded shut the hatch of the boiler tank, to build up the pressure they said. When I asked how they would go about cleaning the tank in the future, there was an absence of response.

This leads me to one of the main criticisms of apprenticeships. The skill of many so called technicians could never suffice in giving someone else a good education. Every operation is done with improvisation, without a standard theoretical background. The teachers often lack knowledge of the skills needed, and have even developed their own technical philosophy. The students will automatically learn this often warped method of working. This is not conducive for their own overall development.

Nevertheless, when looking at the apprentices in motorcycle repairshops one is inclined to believe that in some cases it benefits the young boys. There is the feeling that the boys are learning a skill, or a good sense of improvisation. In the end they will be able to repair a motorcycle or scooter, in some way or another.

There are definite differences in the way children are treated. Those brought in from outside the city and who do not enjoy family protection are most certainly vulnerable to exploitation. They have no one to turn to and, if they complain, are simply beaten or might even be denied food. Family members or sons of friends are treated much better. They are assigned the easier jobs while more attention is given to their education.

Formal education is lacking with most apprentices, two or three years at most. Only the sons of richer shop owners, like Ali in the first shop, have the resources to get an education. A good financial position is alas no guarantee for formal education. Many families still consider it unimportant.

Compared to the earlier group, these children have more options. They have the theoretical chance to learn a skill and to become employed. If successful learners, good apprentices can use their skills to open up their own workshop. They get to know the proper contacts for spare parts, giving the possibility to buy on credit. Good relations with customers in their masters shop can ensure future business.

From a development perspective the situation of these apprentices is still fragile. They have little protection and there is little guarantee for learning. Not being a burden to their parents also seems an important consideration. It may well be that these children in a pre-war Afghanistan would have enjoyed some more education, more protection, or a higher income. It is evident that the priority at the moment is to introduce the children into a working environment as soon as possible, no matter what the cost.

III Two Mule Drivers and a Fruit Stall

I have chosen two separate examples to describe the situation of the self employed poor. Both use the few resources they have to run their own small business. However, as will be seen, they have little room to invest in expanding their small enterprises.

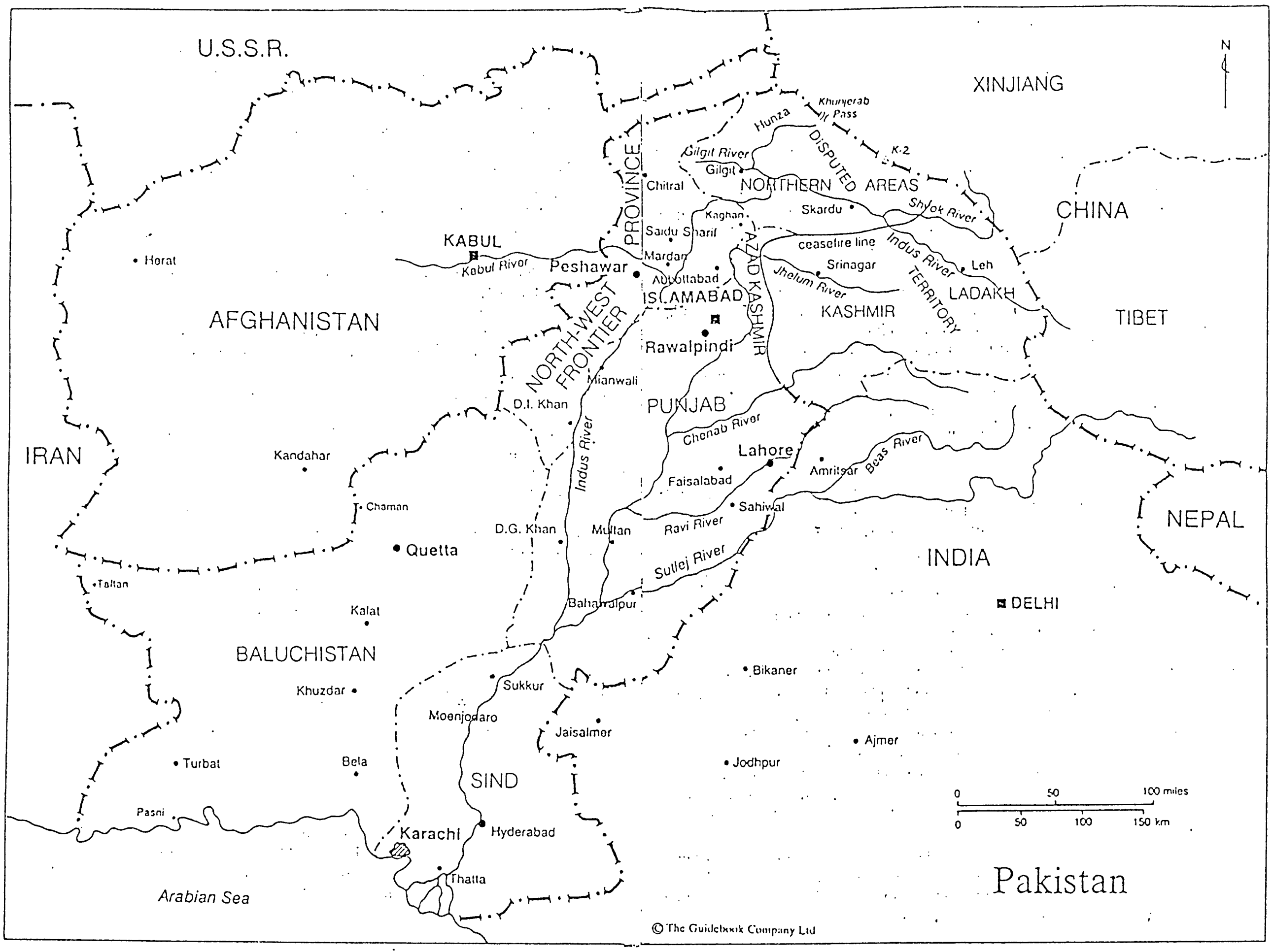
Although eight boys were interviewed, lengthy conversations were held with only two mule drivers and two brothers with a fruit stand. Shorter interviews with other people in the construction business and those with small independent enterprises gave a wider perspective.

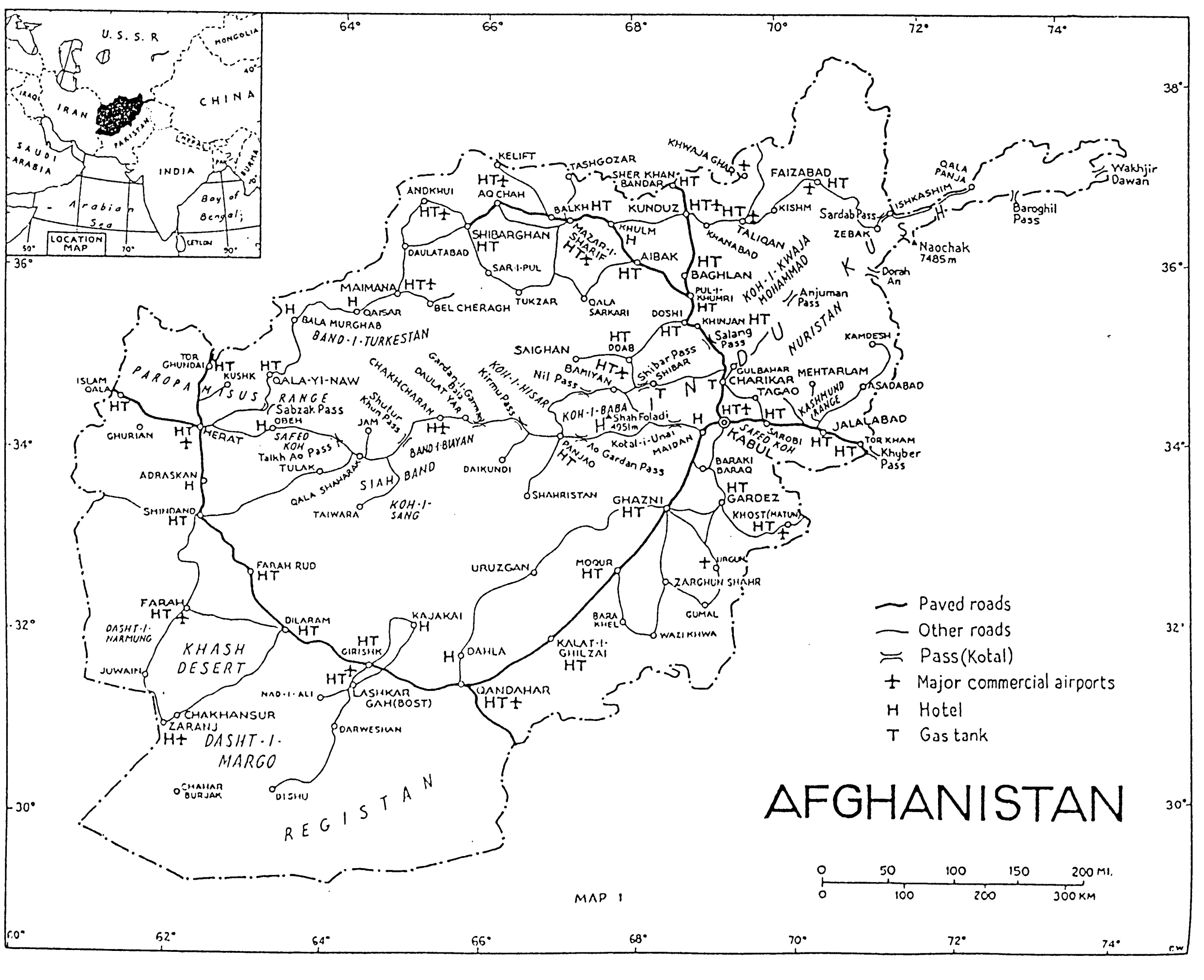


A small boy selling herbs in Qissa Khawani Bazaar. Peshawar 1993.



A boy and his older sister looking for anything that might be usefull in a residential area of Peshawar, 1993.


U.S.S.R.
XINJIANG
CHINA
TIBET
NEPAL
INDIA
IRAN
AFGHANISTAN
KABUL
Kabul River
Peshawar
ISLAMABAD
Rawalpindi
NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE
AZAD KASHMIR
KASHMIR
NORTHERN AREAS
DISPUTED TERRITORY
LADAKH
PUNJAB
BALUCHISTAN
SIND
Herat
Kandahar
Chaman
Quetta
Kalat
Khuzdar
Turbat
Bela
Pasni
Karachi
Hyderabad
Thatta
Sukkur
Moenjodaro
Jaisalmer
Bikaner
Jodhpur
Ajmer
DELHI
Lahore
Amritsar
Faisalabad
Sahiwal
Multan
Bahawalpur
D.G. Khan
D.I. Khan
Mianwali
Chitral
Gilgit
Gilgit River
Hunza
Khunjerab Pass
K-2
Skardu
Shyok River
Indus River
ceasefire line
Srinagar
Jhelum River
Leh
Kaghan
Saidu Sharif
Mardan
Abbottabad
Chenab River
Beas River
Ravi River
Sutlej River
Arabian Sea
0 50 100 miles
0 50 100 150 km
Pakistan
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LOCATION MAP
U.S.S.R
MONGOLIA
CHINA
IRAN
PAKISTAN
INDIA
Arabian Sea
Bay of Bengal
AFGHANISTAN
KABUL
HERAT
KANDAHAR
MAZAR-I-SHARIF
KUNDUZ
FAIZABAD
JALALABAD
GHAZNI
GARDEZ
BAMIYAN
CHARIKAR
Salang Pass
Shibar Pass
Khyber Pass
Wakhjir Dawan
Baroghil Pass
Dorah An
Anjuman Pass
Naochak 7485m
KOH-I-BABA
BAND-I-TURKESTAN
PAROPAMISUS RANGE
NURISTAN
KHASH DESERT
DASHT-I-MARGO
REGISTAN
Paved roads
Other roads
Pass (Kotal)
Major commercial airports
Hotel
Gas tank
0 50 100 150 200 MI.
0 100 200 300 KM
MAP 1
AFGHANISTAN

Mule Boys

In the construction business the only role of children repeatedly witnessed was that of the mule driver. Mules and donkeys are used for short distance transport of construction materials. The necessary bricks, sand, and gravel are supplied to the building site by a constant flow of mules from a storage site. The job of the boys is to herd the animals, walking up and down the same stretch, making sure the animals keep moving.

Down the street from the hotel a house was being built. The street, Namic Mandi, is very busy with numerous restaurants, lapis dealers and engine repair shops. Placing a great deal of building material on the road would have been impractical. Not that this would block traffic coming through, no one in his right mind worries about something so trivial. The traffic would simply drive over the building materials. Afghan and Pakistan trucks, not easily deterred by a pile of bricks, and will simply crush them underneath their wheels. It is therefore necessary to deposit the building materials at a safer place, having them supplied when needed.

A truck loaded far beyond capacity delivers the materials to a dealer with a plot of land. Here the builder comes to order the bricks. Together the builder and the dealer arrange the delivery of the materials to the building site. The dealer has a number of people to whom he delegates the work. However, if someone comes along who offers to do the job for the same or cheaper price, they may also be accepted. Some boys with mules are called and an arrangement is made. The payment is by the load, 2-3 RS per mule per load, depending on distance. Bargaining is as always essential in setting a price[3].

Transporting is team work. Usually there are three or four boys/men. Each heard three or four animals at a time. Very young boys, no taller than the mules or donkeys, may herd them with full confidence, Only the most stubborn mules can ignore a knock on the nose or side with a big stick.

The first step of transporting is packing the bricks onto the first set of mules. When loaded they are led away and loading starts on the next set. On arrival at the building site the bricks are unloaded and the mules sent back. This results in a continuous chain of mules walking to and from the supply site. The fully loaded mules slowly plodding in one direction and the ones with empty sacks quickly trotting back, the herds-boy riding on one of the mules.

When the situation allows, when the street is quiet, the boys make an arrangement so that their walking is cut to a minimum. Instead of walking the total distance, they take care of only a small part of the route, taking over the herding from one another, guiding the mules on to the next person. This works fine as the mules have only to be led slightly and kept moving with some yelling.

Two Afghan boys, herding mules with loads of bricks and rubble to and from the building site in Namic Mandi, were approached to discover the workings of the business. Azim was about thirteen, his brother Tamim, fifteen. Both had been doing this job for quite some time, two to three years. Their father was doing the same. They lived in an outer area of Peshawar and went out every morning to pick up the mules, owned by their father, at a stable/feeding place,[4] and started work. They worked from morning until night,

earning something in the region of twenty-five to thirty-five rupees a day. Most of this money went to their father to pay for food and other living costs, including that of the mules.

Both boys had never gone to school, not having the money or, when questioned a little further, never the intention. When asked if they knew how to read and write the answer was humorous. The youngest admitted he could not, while his older brother claimed he could read but not write. Interesting was that their much more senior brother had been going to school when their family was still living in Afghanistan. He was now working in Karachi, but his job was not specified.

I got the impression that in their case the work was valuable for the total income of the household. Twenty-five rupees might no seem that much, but this can buy one a good meal with meat, vegetables and rice, more than an average meal for most people.

The fruit stall

An example of the self employed poor is a fruit stand run by two brothers on Circular road in University town. As I bought a Coca-Cola at the stand next to the fruit stall, one of the brothers approached me. It soon became clear that the brothers were trying to learn English. Rahman and Hassan, sixteen and eighteen, did indeed speak english relatively well. Twice a week they went into the old city market to buy fruits and vegetables. Taking the bus, they transported the goods to their stall in University town. The stall consisted of a number of crates piled onto a wooden cart. The crates contained oranges, tangerines, apples, bananas, and sometimes tomatoes or another vegetable. They would sell their goods to passers-by, both foreigners and locals and somehow managed to achieve a reasonable turnover. Reasonable in their view of course. On a good day they would sell for about 200 rupees of which only a small percentage was profit. Asking them the buying and selling prices I came to the conclusion that their profit margin was no more than twenty percent. The income on an average day was thus about forty rupees.

However, they were self employed and did not work under strenuous conditions. Their income was supplemented by the aid that was given by different organizations at the refugee camp.

Both brothers had managed to attend a school in the refugee camp for about six years each. They are able to read and write, and master basic mathematical skills. They had however not been able to find a real job and they asked me continuously to help them to find work, as did many others I might add.

Observations

The work of the mule boys is stable, but repetitive. There are very few opportunities to improve the situation. With such a minimum wage it is difficult, if not impossible, to save enough money to invest and buy a mule for expanding business. In this case, however, the father could be blessed with the birth of young animals. Besides the three or four mules, he also owned a horse and two donkeys.

The education these two boys are receiving teaches them how to deal with employers and work with the competition in the field. It will enable them to survive as long as this type of transport is needed and nothing happens to their mules. If they are lucky they might

save some money and invest in a cart, which will create possibilities for transporting larger quantities. This is the way boys have been integrated into the economic system for hundreds of years.

Talking to the two boys at the fruit stand and looking at their business made me realize the difficulties that people have in improving their economic condition. There is not enough capital to invest in expansion of the stall and providing a bigger selection of goods. Another problem is the immense competition. If business goes to well, one is sure to find a neighbour sooner rather than later selling the same goods, for the same or lower prices. This is also true for the mule drivers who are easily replaceable. Small businesses are very vulnerable in this way.

These forms of self employment offer more learning opportunities and responsibilities than the work described in the earlier cases. For the mule boys, responsibility was strong as they worked in direct contact with their own family. There was no evidence, either by what I saw or from their responses, that they were being exploited.

It was interesting to see that an older brother of the mule boys had attended school in Afghanistan. It is likely, although it is difficult to prove, that these boys would have been going to school had the war not erupted. The stability and better economic situation would have allowed more choice for their development. It would have enabled the family to free their sons from labour, allowing them to attend formal education (something of less immediate importance).

The same counts for the boys of the fruit stall. Their willingness to learn was present and this had been proved by the six year school attendance. However, again the refugee situation made it difficult to continue their education. The necessity of earning the extra forty rupees was paramount, they were taking up the traditional responsibilities of providing for their family.

In terms of development, boys such as the mule boys and those of the fruit stall, are better off than beggars and in most cases, better of than apprentices. They have a bit more choice in their activities, even if it is only determining the working hours. Although capital is limited, small investment may be possible. In their case a development agency might contribute with a small scale loan scheme. A revolving fund can give great possibilities.

IV Jewellery Workshops

The two examples below show the activities of children in the category of the entrepreneurial poor. The shops they work in are well established, but only have a limited number of customers. The second example is of a boy who, due to the success of his brothers has moved to a higher class, away from poverty. Nevertheless, the tradition of apprenticeship above education prevails.

Eight boys working in different shops were interviewed. Work varied from watch repair to silver jewellery production. As every shop has at least one apprentice, activities could be witnessed all around.

The lapis cutter

On the second floor of Murad Market, Abdul Karim has a small lapis lazuli workshop. From the rough stone he makes little boxes to sell in the local market and, if lucky, to some foreigners. Karim works mostly at home where he cuts the stone, sometimes until deep into the night. He buys the Lapis from wholesalers dealing only in rough stone. The cut lapis is then glued onto white-metal boxes that are bought from a man specializing in making boxes. When the glue has dried the boxes are finished off by sanding and polishing.

During the day he sits in his shop or tries do some business at the local market. Karim came to Peshawar in the beginning of 1982 with his wife, son and daughter. Two more boys have been born since. They live in a residential area of Peshawar in a well kept three story house. They are unregistered refugees, living off their own money.

The shop is located in Murad Market, a complex within Andershier. The building is four stories high and is filled with workshops and antique shops. The numerous workshops, that frequently use acids, create a bad atmosphere of damp and smoke. If it had been summer I doubt that I would have come there as often as I did.

Working in the shop are two boys, Hatiqullah and Abdul Hadi. Hatiqullah is the son of Karim's wife's brother. He is a new refugee from Kabul who fled the fighting after the collapse of the Najibullah regime. Before he left, he has just started the first year of university, attending a course on pharmacy, after finishing twelve years of school. He now stays at Karim's house where he is at home.

On his arrival in Pakistan Hatiq had no possibilities to further his education. The university of Peshawar has only a limited number of places open for Afghan and lessons are given in Urdu. His only option for continuing his education is to wait for the fighting to stop and the Kabul university to reopen. In the meantime he works in Karim's shop with Abdul Hadi.

Abdul Hadi lives with his own parents. He is the son of a friend's sister. His family has also recently moved to Peshawar due to the fighting in Kabul. He is thirteen years old and was previously going to school in Kabul. Now he does not want to go as he does not speak Urdu and is unwilling to attend Pakistani lessons. He is having some understandable trouble adapting to his new situation.

Karim has offered to teach both boys how to work with lapis. They arrive at the shop before he does, leaving the house at eight in the morning. Here they finish the many lapis boxes that Karim has made the night before, taking off the rough edges and polishing them until they are shiny. For this they use an electric sanding machine. When the power is cut, as happens at least two times a day, they continue by hand.

Sometimes the boys are instructed to make the lapis boxes extra blue. Often the stone contains too much white and does not look right. A solution is to colour them with the ink from ballpoint fillings. Hatiq and Abdul break open the fillings and rub the ink into the boxes with their bare hands. This again raises questions about health risks. The hands are totally drenched in ink for a number of hours.

As all apprentices they also take care of making tea and preparing food. They also carry out miscellaneous little jobs, such as delivering packages, getting supplies etc.

Karim pays for their transport and food but not for their work. He is teaching them a skill, and like in all other workshops, this education is considered enough compensation.

Karim's own children do not work in his shop. The oldest son and daughter both attend a Pakistani school. Only sometimes in the afternoon does Salim, the oldest son, thirteen, come and help. He has however been taught some of the aspects of working with lapis. His father, as will be seen in the observations, considers this as a vital backup education. A wish of Karim is to send his son to a cousin in europe so that he will be able to enjoy a better education. The daughter, eleven, is of course never seen. She is at home with her mother.

The Jewellery workshop

Another workshop I visited regularly was one owned by an Irish-American gemologist who had set up shop in Peshawar. Two of the very best jewellery makers had been hired by him and been taught how to make jewellery to western standards[5]. The jewellery shop was very interesting due to the expertise of the Irish gemologist. Even though the two jewellers working for him are renowned for their skill, their craft had not been up to the high standard of quality demanded in the luxury shops in Europe, Japan and the United States. This was a true example of how foreign expertise can bring new and beneficial ideas to another community, but more on that later.

A cousin of the two master jewellers also worked here as an apprentice. His name was Najib, and he was between fifteen and seventeen years old. He had previously helped in his grandfathers shop, also a silversmith, but now worked with his uncles. He had gone to school when he was young, until the age of twelve.

Najib was not paid anything for the work he was doing, which consisted of the repetitive, simple jobs done by most apprentices. One week he spent cutting out a tear drop shaped centre from two hundred pairs of earrings. He was often sent out to buy gold or silver in the gold bazaar at Andershier. He was not present on every work day, sometimes still helping his grandfather or some other family member.

It is significant that, although Najib's family was relatively wealthy, the priority for formal schooling was not present. Of course the family's success in the jewellery business was enough reason to educate Najib as a silver smith and not to waste his time with history and maths lessons. It was mentioned that the Pakistani schools were no good and that they teach you to become a Pakistani, not an Afghan.

Observations

It was Karim who pointed out to me the importance of having a skill next to formal schooling. In times of trouble the only skills required are those that can earn their money directly, a skill that one can sell to one who does have capital. When Karim was young, an older man, a neighbour, had told him that he must learn to work with lapis. The old man had said that if he would ever lose his money then he would still be able to earn his living

as a stone cutter. This proved to be valuable advice. His business in Kabul was ruined in the war, stone cutting and small time business keeps him afloat.

Karim gave me another example of a university history professor who came looking for a job in the first years of the refugee crisis. Karim taught him how to work with lapis. Afterwards the man could at least earn some money to feed and house his family.

With this story it became very apparent that no matter how high an education might be, one is nowhere without practical skills when faced with total collapse of a system. To name some examples; a biology professor might know the exact process of DNA transfer of the South American hopping fly, but what use is this information if the university is destroyed, will anybody pay him to teach him the knowledge he or she has? Will not the simple farmer, who knows how to grow wheat and slaughter goats, be of far more value when talking about survival? This should not be taken too lightly, I can imagine that some might laugh at this idea. But only think of how many people at the office or university know how to repair a car. Not many are able, even though the vast majority owns one.

For the two boys this also has significance. They have been disrupted in their education, there are no universities to attend and work opportunities are scarce. Even if these opportunities were available, unwillingness or fear of attending a school in a foreign country, as is the case with Abdul Hadi, can indeed hinder education. The only alternative is to learn a skill. If the war does not end they will need skills to earn an income. It is a typical example of trusting traditional practices.

If we examine the work of the boys in both the lapis shop and at the silversmiths, the work they are doing is positive. Although the boys were not compensated for their labour in cash, both masters replied that this was simply not done and because the boys were just learning. I did however notice that the boys were not always present in the workshops, sometimes doing tasks elsewhere. They were not forced to work, as the boys in the motorcycle repair shop were. It seemed that in these two cases there was a true intent to teach the boys a skill and not to exploit them to the fullest. The concern for their wellbeing is strong.

Even though ample room is provided for the development of the boys, financially and educationally, there is still the tendency to stay with traditional education skills as a means of security. This is true for both working at the lapis workshop and the jewellery workshop. Had the people not been chased out of their stable environment into a situation where one has to fight for a decent living, it is likely that they would have all finished their education.

I would like to make one more comment about the jewellery workshop run by the Irish-American. His years of training in both the United States and the United Kingdom had given him an immense amount of knowledge on gemstones and jewellery. The knowledge was now being past on to his workers. This gave the workers the opportunity to measure their skills outside their own environment. As so many jewellery makers they had considered themselves experts, having only the local market as reference. Now they had discovered that there was much more to learn. Enterprises as such, with a commercially driven foreign

expert, could have a major impact on the improvement of technical education and production. It is an example of external agencies being able to help in development, introducing new ideas and skills.

V The antique shop

This example fits the description of the near poor. Although business is going well, it still does not suffice to move out of the poverty level. Every bit of extra income is needed to invest so as to stay afloat in the highly competitive market. Although the above case mentions only two boys, seven shop owners sons in total were interviewed at length.

Around the corner of Karim's lapis shop is the antique shop of Hadji Janat Gul. The shop is small, square, and filled top to bottom with merchandise. On the walls, dresses and shawls collect dust in unbelievable quantities. Shelves contain an enormous variety of embroidered pieces, brass cups and bowls and numerous other dusty objects. In one corner there is a permanent pile of woollen Afghan socks and gloves, representing only a small proportion of what can be supplied. Other items to be found are wooden stamps, spoons, chairs and chests, old locks, pottery, amber beads and necklaces. Janat Gul is a wholesaler, selling to local shop keepers and foreign businessmen.

Hadji Janat Gul fled Kabul and Afghanistan in 1982 taking his family, wife and three children, to Peshawar. His house and antique business in Kabul was left behind. Now they live in Jalo-zi refugee camp. Five more children have been born since then, bringing the total to five boys and three girls. One of the boys goes to school, three are still too young. The girls stay at home helping the mother in daily tasks.

In the last two years the eldest son, Gholam Hyder, has been helping in the shop. Gholam is about 17 years old. He is a friendly character, if he drops his hard-sell tactics that are standard for most sellers in the bazaar. These more aggressive tactics are common among the Pakistani salesmen, but among the older Afghans this is lacking. The younger generation, those who have grown up in Peshawar, seem to have taken up this annoying habit.

After going to school for eight years, his father decided that it was time that Gholam be fully integrated into the antique trade. He had spent some years sitting in the shop in the afternoons after school. It became apparent that full time work was mainly a security measure. Should anything happen to the father then Gholam could continue running the business on his own, guaranteeing an income.

Gholam has learned to do business from his father and the other people in the bazaar. Much of the time both father and son are present, but Gholam was also trusted to be alone. Only when there were important customers or serious business to be done was it necessary for the father to be there. Gholam also takes care of ordering tea, preparing the lunch, consisting of chicken soup and bread, and does some of the delivery.

As a means of earning some money of his own, Gholam buys his own goods, going to Islamabad every Friday to sell at the black market. With this he sometimes makes a

good turnover, prices being much higher in the capital than in Peshawar. He does this with his cousin Jealam (my translator), a new refugee now living in the same household.

Jealam is a cousin of Gholam. he is a twenty year old Afghan who only recently arrived in Peshawar. He was going to university when the Najibullah regime collapsed and the fighting between the different Mujahedin groups erupted. His case is typical of refugees with a higher education. With his twelve years of school and almost two years of University, he is now without a job and without the possibility of continuing his education.

His only option is to go to the bazaar and visit different family members. He is not skilled in trading and I was often able to buy things at a better price. His family members have now been trying to push him into the antique trade, if not to contribute to the family income, then to have at least some income for himself. He goes to Islamabad with Gholam, where he sells items that one of his uncle supplies. He can then keep the profit.

Observations

Owning an antique shop is one of the better ways to do business. It generates a good income and one is independent in deciding working hours and working conditions. It is however still not an answer to all problems. The large family of Janat Gul takes up much of the resources that could otherwise be invested. The precarious situation in Pakistan, worse living conditions, uncertainty of the future, has prompted the father to push his son to work before properly finishing his education. Ensuring the family income is, again, of prime importance.

I am convinced that Gholam would have had more opportunity to finish his education had he remained in a peaceful Afghanistan. This view was strengthened by the father's determination to see the second son finish his. Also the education of his daughters would have been possible. In conversation the difficulties of sending the girls to school became evident. Problems of both facilities and transporting the girls to school safely were mentioned. The latter problem was one of honour in the community. Girls not properly brought to school, in a wagon or car, would be subject to humiliation.

Jealam was another example of those with a high education not being able to find employment. As his is not the only case, many people with an education do not have a job, it is tempting to speculate what this means, seen in the light of regression. With millions of refugees how can it be that so many people with the knowledge are out of work? They could be teaching children to read and write. Apparently the demand for such services is very low. It might be argued that the refugees have too little money to pay for such services, but some money is better than none for the unemployed receiving no benefits at all.

Of course the impossibility of finding employment for higher educated people, does not motivate families to invest in the education of their children. It is better that they learn to work and be guaranteed of an income. It is a view that makes sense in the short term, or as long as the war continues and jobs are simply not to be found. This attitude will have consequences in the long term. It will take years to educate the people necessary for the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

Although both boys had an education and some money is available, they are caught in the trap that the refugee crisis has created. The lack of certainty in the future and experiences with distressing events, have made both their families determined to safe guard their security. This has resulted, for both Gholam and Jealam, in a premature termination of their education, in favour of work and income generation.

VI A Closing Story

To end this section of the paper I leave this story told to me by my good friend Karim on the last day in Peshawar, during the last part of my last encounter with him. It exemplifies the importance Afghan people attach to teaching their children a skill that can guarantee an income in the future.

Karim told me : *"There was once a King. He was ruler of all the land. He appointed his ministers and gave orders to his armies in far lands. But with all his wealth and power, the King was not happy. `I don't know anything', he thought to himself. `I have all this power and people obey my smallest demands, but I cannot even fix this small tear in my shirt'.*

> *Now the King's wife made carpets which she wove with such skill that their beauty cannot be described here. One morning the King asked her to teach him the skill. So every day the King sat next to his wife and helped with her weaving, watching carefully and learning.*
>
> *After some years the fortune of the land changed. Armies from other places invaded the once peaceful Kingdom, pillaging and looting as they came. They captured all the ministers and had them executed. When they came to the King, the King asked them 'Why do you want to kill me, now I am a poor man and I have nothing. If you let me live I can make carpets and you can sell them'. So they put the King in jail and gave him some tools so he could work.*
>
> *The King started work as soon as he could and started to weave a most beautiful carpet, such as his wife had taught him. As he weaved, he wrote a message in the intricate patterns. When the carpet was finished he told the guards to sell the carpet only to a rich and learned person and not to the normal folk who would not be able to understand the 'beauty' of the work.*
>
> *As it happened the carpet was sold to an important carpet merchant still working in the occupied land. When the wife of the merchant saw the carpet she instantly recognized the secret written message. She quickly went to tell her husband what she had discovered, and that the King was still alive.*
>
> *With careful discussion a plan was set up to rescue the King. With an armed band of five men the King was freed. As soon as the King was free the people rallied behind him. He soon had the power to expel the rogues that had ravaged his Kingdom. Peace was restored once more and the king ruled justly for many more years.*
>
> *You see. this is because of the work with the hands. If you have a skill, it is a strngth,, one can save you and your wife and children in the worst times.*

Notes:

[1] Remeny divides the poor into five distinct groups. From the poorest to the less poor, the categories are as follows; The vulnerable/ultra poor; the labouring poor; the self employed poor; entrepreneurial poor; and the near poor.

[2] Although some of my Afghan friends admitted that the abuse of children did happen, they claimed it did not occur among Afghans, but only with Pakistani masters.

[3] The prices do not vary much, but it truly depends on the bargaining power of the parties involved. The final price is only set on mutual agreement.

[4] In the city of Peshawar I noticed a number of communal stables. Here people who owned an ox or mule could bring their animal to feed and be cared for in return for a fee. Some stalls called up biblical images, especially in contrast to the surrounding city.

[5] The standards of jewellery making are different than in the west. Not only is the quality of the workmanship expected to be higher in the west, but colour preferences vary. Pakistanis and Afghans prefer the very yellow gold, while, as claimed by my good friend, in the west the most popular colours tend towards whiter and pinker gold.

Chapter One

A Research Approach Unfolds

I The Location

On November 16th, 1992 I left for Peshawar, Pakistan, to carry out the research proposed. Peshawar lies in the North West Frontier Province on the border with Afghanistan. The population numbers around 2.5 million, including at least 1 million Afghan refugees. Peshawar is a frontier town, the last major city before the mountain ranges which divide Pakistan from Afghanistan. Twenty kilometres west of the city, effective government control ceases to exist.

Since 1978, about 3.6 million Afghans fled to Pakistan. The refugees are now settled in 321 officially designated camps. Most of these official camps are located in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). In 1987, the Pakistan government estimated the number of refugees in the NWFP to be as high as 2.1 million. In the other provinces the numbers were significantly lower; Baluchistan (0.7 million), Sind (0.2 million) the Punjab (0.15 million), (World Bank 1987)[1]. Since the fighting subsided in the Afghan countryside, over a million refugees have returned back to Afghanistan. More than two million still remain.

Arrival

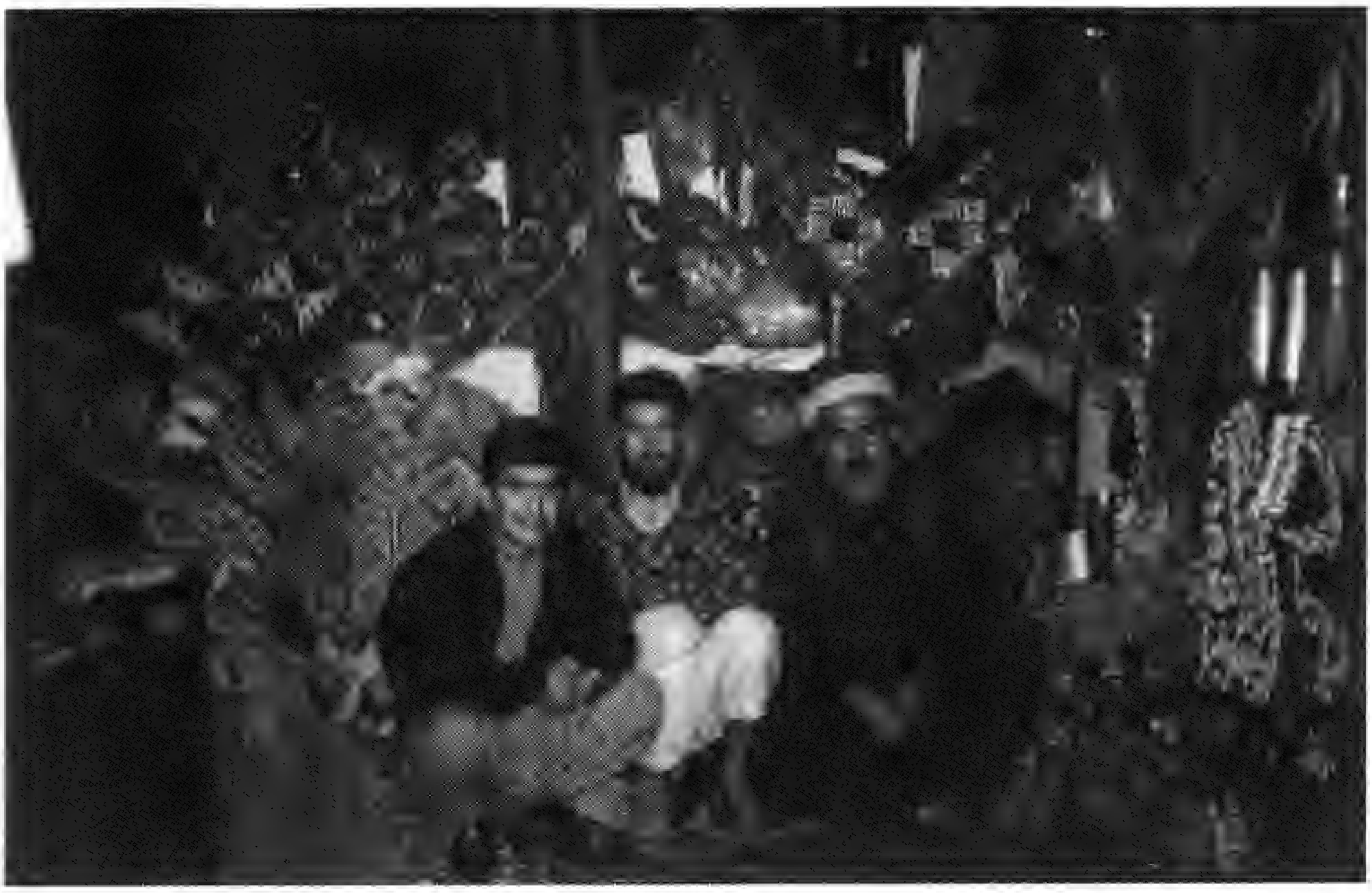
Flying with Tarom, Romanian Airlines, was an experience not worth repeating. After being crammed into minimal space for nine hours the aircraft arrived in Karachi. With the cramp in my left leg slowly subsiding, I booked a further flight to Peshawar, in preference to the alternative 48 hour train journey. At Peshawar airport I was thankfully picked up by a friend. He booked me into a hotel in the old city of Peshawar before taking me out to dinner and a French party that same night. It was a good introduction to the social scene of development workers.

I stayed in the City Hotel for three months, the rooms being clean and cheap, with a terrace with a view directly outside. Located directly in the old city, the place was very favourable for my research, for it is here that most activities of trade and production take place. An alternative would have been to rent a place in University town among the other foreigners. Staying at the house of an Afghan was not permitted. Living in the old city was therefore the best method for experiencing the activities of daily life.

The Old City

Located on the site of an old city gate, now destroyed to make way for traffic, the hotel is surrounded by activities of the city. This resulted in a, for myself, unprecedented stimulation of the auditory receptors.

Every morning before sunrise, from the Mosque across the street, the Mullah calls the faithful to prayer, amplified greatly by the wonders of modern technology. Soon after, the traffic starts to flow. Flying Coaches, buses made from old customized Bedford trucks, come rumbling down the street, honking their great variety of horns, sounding more like an attraction at an amusement fair than a vehicle for public transport. The swaying



Gholam Hyder, Jealam and Janut Gul in Murad Market, Peshawar 1993.



Abdul Hadi and Hatiqullah in the shop of Karim
Peshawar, 1993.



Najib in the jewellery workshop
Peshawar, 1993.

Chapter Six

Concluding Remarks: Refugee Children within the Context of Development and Education

I Introductory notes

The five cases presented in the previous chapter illustrate the many varieties of work done by children. There are children who have to beg, those who are being slightly exploited, children whose work is vital to the family income, and others who are learning a good skill or are even preparing to take over the family shop. Although the options for education differ from group to group, the tendency to integrate children into the labour economy, so as to increase the family income and security, is predominant.

This has had great consequences for the formal schooling of refugee children. Parents, and with them the -in Afghan tradition most powerful- elder brothers, will also see to it that the children help out in making a living. The greater the need, the more hard pressed they will be to pursue short term interests. They will not readily support the long-term and highly risky option to increase income that may come through formal education.

Besides financial insecurity, another factor, hampering formal education, is the negative attitude both parents and children have towards integration into the Pakistan community. As presented in the case of Abdul Hadi, the boy in lapis lazuli shop, there is little willingness to go to a Pakistani school. All Afghans have a strong determination to return the Afghanistan as soon as the conditions are safe. Even those families who have sent their children to Pakistani schools and have family members working in Pakistani companies, are determined to do so. I have not met one Afghan who, if conditions were as they were before the war, did not wish to return to his mother country. This attitude does not motivate people to send children to the camp schools, where the curriculum is often Pakistan based.

When discussing learning options for children, it would be realistic to forget about sending children to school. Very few parents facing the challenge of immediate survival would be prepared to permit their children go forgo work. This is certainly the case in a society where compulsory education, in practice, does not exist. It would then make much more sense to look at what learning opportunities are conceivable within the daily working life of these children. For some categories the scenarios seem rather fixed for others there are more chances. Thus, a beggar/scavenger boy will only learn how to become a professional beggar and stay at the margin of society. For those learning from a master, under some kind of apprenticeship arrangement, the chances of learning a skill is much greater. Children who grow up in a family business, such as the mule boys, will be secure

in their work, but the family's low income prevents them from ever getting a school education. They do have the opportunity to make contacts in the business and become experts in their field.

An important consideration emerging from the research is that the best conditions for learning are when apprentices are employed by their family members. The children that I have seen working under the family umbrella were all in better care than those employed otherwise. The likely explanation is that it is in the father's interest to teach his children well and to give them what is needed. He will depend on his children when he grows old. Anthropological research (Keesing 1975) has extensively reported on the mutual benefits of families as units of production. In the lapis and antique shops the parent is certainly aware that teaching the children well is advantageous for the whole family. The teaching of children by the father or a close relative can make a significant difference with learning from a non-related master. What is learned under non-related masters greatly depends on the willingness of the master to teach his apprentices. Often the master neglects this duty and simply uses the children as a form of cheap labour. The practical consequences of this observation are important: development interventions should then see to it that children remain with their families, or whenever possible, that family ties be restored.

Higher income families usually look more favourably at formal education, they do not need to send their children to work. However, here too, practicality is the determining factor. This leads me to a second postulation based on my observations of a wide range of cases. The refugee crisis, being for most Afghans a situation of distress, has also led the relatively well-to do Afghans to choose for security first. Although they can afford to send their children to school, they too adhere to traditional methods for assuring future earnings. They are not inclined to experiment with what they see as alternatives such as formal education.

In the case of Gholam Hyder, for example, it was imperative for him to be able to take care of the antique business as soon as possible. This was despite the relatively large income which they enjoyed. If anything might happen to the father, Gholam must take care of the buying and selling.

The discussion about formal education only becomes meaningful, when there is an outlook at a better life. If parents feel that an improvement of conditions is likely, moving back to the home country, stability and a peaceful atmosphere are possibilities, then they will feel confident and allow for alternative, less proven methods, of investment and 'development'.

Development through education is a major point of discussion in the this final chapter. The importance of taking the Afghan perspective into consideration before implementing a development programme is vital to its success. Looking at development from an Afghan perspective will mean that some long held moral principles of foreign development workers have to be revised, or at least re-examined. In this chapter, education will be addressed as one of the key components of development processes.

II Understanding the Afghan Reluctance towards Education

There are factors that make the goal of formal education for Afghan refugee children difficult to achieve. Some of these problems were made apparent in Chapter 4, which focused on the education of Afghan children. A major factor that hampers the educational programmes is a predominant suspicion of the refugees of developmental programmes. A cause of these objections can be sought in the traumas and fears that have been experienced by the Afghan refugees. This experience is well documented in the anthropological literature, Keesing (1975), for example, sees conservatism as a common reaction by societies faced with massive external threats.

The argument presented here is that when positive conditions cease to exist, or are even reversed, people tend to go back to behavioral patterns that served well during earlier times, before the changes brought about by development took place. This idea of **regression** can serve as the overarching conceptual framework in which the collective behaviour of refugees should be understood.

In concrete terms **regression** stipulates that under negative conditions newly learned attitudes, approaches, and social structures are jettisoned to make room for the older ways. These older ways could be interpreted being reactionary, primitive, or rigid. It might perhaps be fairer to view older ways foremost as the only coping mechanisms available to people whose lives and prospects are being jeopardized by a refugee crisis.

Developmental regression can cause the quality of life of all refugees to get worse. However, it may also lead to a better survival structure: preservation of culture, language, customs may well succeed in keeping families united and in making them stronger. Combined with an overriding idea among the refugees that their situation is temporary, any willingness to adapt to the new situation, by for example learning a new language, is lacking. The Afghans wish more than anything to return home and try to keep their own traditions in tact.

Regression will reveal various cultural- or group-specific patterns of adjustment. Somali refugees in Kenya will revert or regress to different coping mechanisms than the Guatemalan indians now living in Mexico, or in this case, than the Afghans in Pakistan.

In the late Seventies, the Afghans were en route to broader education, more tolerance of secular ideas, broader opportunities for girls and women, a greater participation in decision making by the people and to creating more learning space for their children. In the larger cities it was possible for girls to walk around without the all-covering chadri; girls were a common sight in primary schools, and in 1974, more than half of the students of the Academy for Teacher Trainers, consisted of young women (personal communication N. van Oudenhoven). The negative development conditions, brought in by the devastating war, called a halt to all this and even, at least at the surface, lost most of the earlier gains. The result was a lesser tolerance for deviant ideas, a clamp-down on the freedom for women, greater authoritarianism, and less willingness to allow children to have an adolescence. Fewer options for almost every body.

The movement backwards was strengthened by other developments ensuing from the war. The enormous migration of Afghans within Afghanistan, as well as to neighboring countries, the collapse of the rural economy, the dissolving of traditional loyalty and power structures, as well as having to fight a technically superior opponent, triggered off an underlying consciousness process amongst the Afghans (Gravemeyer 1990, p.97). People were compelled to reflect on their former conditions and to question the options for the future. There is no doubt that many saw their traditional background, or what they perceived as such, as a solution.

The growth of Islamic fundamentalism can be understood in this light. The Islamic parties were the first to respond with drastic change to the situation (ibid). The mere mentioning of the idea that girls should attend school at the beginning of the conflict, resulted in aggressive criticism. One could be denounced as a communist collaborator, a traitor to Afghanistan, an enemy of Islam.

The importance of formal education for the young diminished as families tried to survive. Children were instead pressured to grow up faster, young boys have to find work as soon as they are able, while the girls marry at an even earlier age than before. An interesting statistic to exemplify the point that children are pushed into adulthood earlier is the fertility rate. The current refugee population has the highest fertility rate ever recorded world-wide. This clearly indicates the early marrying age of girls. Over half the Afghan refugee women have had six or more pregnancies, and some as many as twelve (N.H. Dupree 1992, p.6).

In many cases Afghans are trying to hold on desperately and even return to their old way of living. Not to the lifestyle created by development and outside influence, but to the 'true Afghan' way of being. The fact that this is actually happening is difficult to prove, but significant indicators are present.

These views are corroborated by findings reported at a conference on the 'Children of Afghanistan in War and Refugee camps' organised in Stockholm in 1987 (Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, 1987). When talking about the social and psychological effects on children, Ekling Skoglund list the following reactions among a long list of psychological reactions:

- serious anxiety
- dependency
- emotional isolation
- social isolation
- regression

Regression is here explicitly mentioned as a social phenomenon in response to a threatening situation; a secure, but conservative survival strategy. It is not difficult to see that the other mentioned reactions are closely related to regression. It is speculated here that adults, like children, respond in ways not very different from children and, that groups of families show comparable patterns of regression.

Other psychological research, on reactions to distressing situations, have showed similar results. As Morgan points out; people suffering from anxiety often try to return to a previous condition of stability. Here Morgan applies the theory of Bion, who is an associate of the Tavistock Institute; he brings forth some coping mechanisms of people in distress. Bion suggests that groups often regress to childhood patterns of behaviour to protect themselves from uncomfortable aspects of the real world. Under normal conditions, while carrying out daily tasks, the group also directs its energies to keep in contact with the external world. When problems arise that threaten the group, the group tends to divert the energies for task performance and utilize them to defend itself against anxieties caused by the new situation. Preoccupation with defence obliterates the group's concerns for the outside world (Morgan 1986, p.216).

One response to a crisis situation is described as a *fight-flight* pattern. The group tends to project its fears on an enemy of some kind. This enemy embodies the unconscious persecutory anxiety experience of the group. It can be a government regulation, a public attitude, or a particular person or organisation that appears to be threatening. While this unites the group and makes strong leadership possible, the *fight-flight* process seems to distort peoples perception of reality. This will ultimately weaken the group's ability to cope with the problem. Energy is directed towards protecting the group from danger rather than taking a balanced look at the situation (Morgan 1986, p.217).

The demand for a strong leader corresponds directly with the fear of an outside threat. While group members proclaim helplessness in coping with the situation, they idealize the chosen leader, sometimes seeing him as an attractive symbol of the past. For the leader to be successful, he will have to embody traits fantasized by the people in the group (op.cit. p.216). This can explain the character of military and religious leaders that have the most power among the Afghans. The military leaders are strong and posses the qualities of 'true Afghans'. Religious leaders are orthodox and strict in their beliefs or, as they claim, are true Muslims. This attitude has made it possible for the Afghans to win the war. However, the acceptance of such leading figures has increased the intolerance of non-conservative ideas. This will slow any development process that deviates from the Afghan view.

For Afghans the main enemy was of course the Soviet Union, but also the social policies that the left-wing government introduced, were interpreted as a threat. These social policies were not all repressive. As mentioned earlier, the rights of women were improved. Also, there were genuine efforts to improve education, a number of land reforms that should have benefited small farmers were introduced. But as an extension of the communist regime, these policies were equated with the destruction of the Afghan people.

As the positive communist reforms can be compared with development initiatives of other foreign groups, this hostility was directed to all forms of change that deviated from the traditional Afghan expectations. This includes western education programmes, both for women and children. Many Afghans have chosen to fight for themselves and make decisions without the interference of outsiders. The strong-mindedness (some will argue

narrow-mindedness) of Afghans will not allow for initiatives from outside the community to dominate their lives. This has repercussions for external interventions. The importance of working in close cooperation with the Afghans, in any development project, becomes apparent.

III Reaching Development through Education

Probably the most powerful tool for increasing development through relief aid is by promoting education and training programmes. It would be difficult to think of any other intervention that would be more effective than education, however widely this concept has been defined. Would food programmes suffice? or the supply of arms? or sums of money to the heads of households? or awarding them full citizen's rights of the host country? It is not likely that any, or taken together, of these and similar measures would really have made a lasting difference. Finding forms of education that are sensitive and constructive is one of the major development challenges.

Some insight into how these challenges can be met have been elaborated in the foregoing study. Afghans have chosen to educate their young through traditional means, that is by incorporating them into the work force. It guarantees them of some sort of income and, in most cases, teaches the young a skill with which they can make a living in the future.

Work done by children is often condemned outright by western development agencies, whose policies are often dictated from head offices far removed from the refugee camps and villages. It is a standpoint of many that formal schooling is a priority. But in a situation such as that of Afghan refugee children, as argued earlier, it is financially, physically and socially impossible to realize full schooling for even a small percentage of the children. Furthermore, even if it was available, a school curriculum would not automatically insure employment for the child in the future. Such a guarantee is the priority of Afghans.

Inevitably, discussions about working children will touch on the issue of child labour. Obviously, when the work done by children runs counter to their well-being it is 'child labour' (Sawyer 1988, Vittachi 1989, a.o.). The Anti-Slavery Society presented their definition to the United Nations in the International Year of the Child as '*...the employment of children in conditions which, taken together and viewed in the context of the social and economic background of the region, are likely to be harmful to their mental, physical or moral growth and eventually to the development of their potential*'.[1] However, as has been repeatedly demonstrated, apprenticeship is a form of work that can teach a child skills that are of utmost importance for his well being. This type of work should not be condemned.

When designing an education programme in a society different than ones own it is necessary to consider the opinions of the people that will receive the aid. All to often western ideas are still implemented to try and solve peoples problems in totally different environments.

Many governments, donor and aid organizations, now recognize the advantage of having the beneficiaries participate in the decision-making and implementation process of a project. Working through a bottom up approach, letting people determine their own development can be much more efficient than implementing programmes designed by those far removed from the ground situation. It does not mean that only the ideas of the supported group should be followed. Such a one sided view would not leave room for the introduction of outside recommendations, which could prove useful. It is a matter of weighing out the possibilities.

Every developmental agency should realize that marginalized or disadvantaged people too have ample knowledge and understanding of their condition. Furthermore, they often have enough strength and persistence to collectively organize programmes to better their situation. If organized they can lobby for funds or training programmes which they consider to be of direct importance. It should be one of the tasks of development organizations to help in setting up such groups and strengthening their position. For stimulating education, groups of working children could be organized, who could then collectively demand a training programme that is relevant.

Many studies confirm the importance of the participation of the beneficiaries in the planning, design and implementation of projects. Projects are more likely to succeed when beneficiaries are regularly consulted and involved in the decision making at all the stages of the project (Robinson 1992, p.35)

It has been proven that programmes that have been identified as having relevance by those to be trained, always support and encourage the capacities of the beneficiaries (Anderson and Woodrow 1989, p.85). This shows the importance of recognizing the strengths of the group that is being supported. It is essential to build on the capabilities that are already present among the refugees, not simply introducing new ideas that are considered helpful from a western perspective.

To discover what the priorities are of any marginalized group, it is necessary to go into discussion with the beneficiaries themselves. It can be expected that their ideas will be different to that of a development agency. The challenge for Development agencies is then to concentrate on making useful suggestions, not forcing their ideas onto the people they are trying to help.

IV Concluding Remarks

Education of refugee children, so that they can live a constructive life, is a very difficult task. The resulting anxiety of the events that caused the uncertainty of the future, brings along numerous complications. It is a problem that has to be addressed thoughtfully and comprehensively.

To make useful developmental suggestions, an understanding of the choices left open for refugees is surely needed. How to integrate the traditional attitudes and a developmental strategy to the good of the beneficiaries, should always be a central question for any aid organization.

The educational possibilities of Afghan refugee children is still very limited, but education is crucial for their eventual adaption and survival. The lives of the children has been severely disrupted by war and civil strife, forced to acculturate to a new world different from that of which they came, they require education to adjust to their new environment. The education for a displaced child can mean the difference between begging on the streets and finding paid employment.

Dominant attitudes that condemn work of children should not make it more difficult for children to get an education. Their work might be the only reliable and trusted means for gaining an education. Where this is the case, this work must be accepted as justifiable way to learn the skills needed for the future. Development initiative must then be promoted that correspond with these activities taking in consideration the views of the Afghans refugees themselves. They should control their own destiny.

It must not be forgotten that educating refugee children is ultimately in the best interest of governments and the international community. The world cannot afford to let the victims of war suffer in ignorance. The children are the ones who will have to make peace and work towards reconstruction and further development.

Notes:

[1] ECOSOC, Sub-Commission, 32nd session, Agenda item 12, The Exploitation of Child Labour, Oral Intervention on behalf of the Anti-Slavery Society by Leah Levin, p.2, paragraph 3.

Afterword

A first outline for future research

This report is in fact a long journey that started a long time before I went to Peshawar. My interest in Afghans and their situation has it roots going back many years, to the time in my childhood spent in Afghanistan. The field work had originally a diffuse or rather broad focus and was mainly motivated to revisit the Afghans, knowing that their country was not open to me. During the field work, and during the writing of this paper, I got a stronger sense of purpose and direction. Had I to start all over again, I would follow a more focused approach.

I hope I can pursue this goal in the years to come. When looking back at the refugee children, I am amazed that many of them did reasonably well, some of them even exceedingly so. This is all the more remarkable in the light of their appalling circumstances. Apparently these children are far more resilient than I -unconsciously- had expected them to be. I also think that a number of children could be seen as 'positively deviating' from the norm, that is, faring much better than others.

This phenomenon of resilience and positive deviance, seems to me an important issues to be researched. It would be worthwhile to study those factors that make children strong, that do protect them, or, that somehow give them the strength to survive, in spite of the many hardships.

An issue that will be of great importance in the near future will be the case of Afghan children who have been actively engaged in the fighting. Their reintegration into normal society is vital for the Afghan future. Giving such children a worthwhile alternative to aggression is a must. Examples of successful integration would be of great interest.

metal chains on the bumpers give the buses an extra effect of elevated transport. Shouts of 'shaaba, shaaba' {hurry, hurry) from the bus boys always evoke a sense of urgency, even when trying to catch an extra hour of sleep.

The buses are soon followed by a steady and very penetrating buzzing sound, the rickshaws. These small scooter taxis whose noise, as well as behaviour, resemble flies, persistently annoy the peaceful pedestrian. Up to five rickshaws can zoom onto a single potential customer, attracted like flies to camel dung.

Nine o'clock is the average time at which the workshops open their doors and a furious racket starts to fill the air. Across the street from the hotel a number of motorcycle and scooter workshops are located. Engines are apparently always tested by revving at full capacity. Removal of the exhaust pipe before such inspection seems to be standard procedure. To the right of the hotel, metal workshops produce iron works such as gates, window grates and metal furniture. The noise produced by the sawing of metal sheets, welding and hammer blows, penetrates the thickest wall. An hour or so later the sugar cane salesman opens his stand. With practised movements, he cuts the cane into edible pieces. This generates a short repetitive snipping sound. As innocuous as this might seem, it is surprising how well it competes for audibility with other sources of noise, as it continues unabated throughout the day.

When the morning is well under way, the sounds of silence have become only words of a song. As the traffic moves through, trucks, personal cars, ox carts and bicycles join in the racket. Honking loud and often is rule number one when driving in Pakistan. Not only does it serve to warn other drivers of your actions, it is also the way to make one's personal presence known. Drivers honk for no apparent reason, on, for example, an empty street. It is also believed that the horn has a mythical power of resolving road congestion. Drivers facing each other head on in a traffic jam, will under no circumstances back up and make way, instead inching forward and honking very loud is standard procedure. The only time the horn is not used is when one backs out of a driveway without looking and at great speed. Warning others of such actions is unfair, as the driver backing out of his garage also has no knowledge of what traffic might be approaching.

In this pandemonium it is surprising that hardly anywhere music is heard. One would expect that the popular songs would be played at full volume, through broken speakers, sharing the local melodies with passers-by. However, this was not the way things are done.

Just as a rock band enhances its live acts with smoke, this symphony of noise cannot be fully appreciated without some very special effects, i.e. pollution. Peshawar lies in a bowl. Mountains border the area in the east and the north, and wind is a scarce phenomenon. It took two weeks to realize that the mountains were actually very close. This was only after it had rained and the dust and pollution had been washed to the ground. On other days the pollution could be so bad that it was difficult to see the end of the hallway inside the hotel. As for its causes; first, most of the mechanized transport uses diesel as fuel. This results in all buses, trucks, and many personal cars belching out black soot. Bad tuning on all vehicles means that even new cars smoke unremittingly. Rickshaws,

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In accordance with an agreement signed in Geneva on May 15, 1988, Soviet troops evacuated Afghanistan before February 15, 1989. They left behind a ruined country with more than a million dead. Even as they left, large shipments of arms were still arriving daily form the Soviet Union. The government controlled cities were stockpiled to the full. Contributions totalled up to 2.4 billion dollars annually in these years (Liu and LeVine 1991, p.26-27). The expected quick defeat of the government did not occur. The government appeared to be able to keep its troops loyal with good salaries. Early inter-tribal rivalry also prevented concerted Mujahedin action. The war carried on for another three years, with more deaths and destruction.

VI The fall of Najibullah and the present Government

Change occurred very rapidly in April of 1992. The major city in the north, Mazar-i-Sharif, fell in the hands of the famous Tadjik rebel leader Ahmed Shah Massoud when the Uzbek military commander Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostam deserted Najibullah to join in with the Mujahedin. Following this, Najibullah announced that he would be prepared to step down as part of a United Nations sponsored peace plan. This weakened his hold on power and he was quickly removed. Except for the capital, Kabul, all major cities were rapidly, and without bloodshed, taken over by the mujahedin. The new commanders in Kabul came into agreement with the different rebel leaders so as to avoid a bloodbath in Kabul. Within days the different mujahedin factions entered Kabul and a few weeks later the political leaders came from Peshawar to form a new interim administration. The former philosophy professor, Sebgatullah Mojadiddi of the small resistance movement Jabha-i-Nijad-i-Mili, became the first interim-president (Volkskrant April 15,17,18,20 1992) (NRC Handelsblad April 17,21,23,24, 1992).

With two years gone by since the removal of Najibullah, the situation in Afghanistan has still not stabilized, in the cities the strife continues. Competing mujahedin groups have been fighting in and around Kabul. Hezb-i-Islami, under leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, is still intent on assuming a dominant role. His forces have been shelling Kabul in the last couple of weeks. The official government forces, of President Burhanuddin Rabbani of the Jamail-i-Islami, return fire, hitting other parts of the city. Other groups also fight out their differences with unrestrained violence. This continues despite agreements signed between the groups involved in the dispute.

So far, an estimated 15,000 people have been killed since the fall of Najibullah. Thousands are again fleeing Kabul. Even when the shelling stops, as it has done for limited periods of time, there are still numerous groups of armed men roaming the streets, full of distrust and no fear of killing. Indiscriminate shelling and planted bombs have also killed people in market places and residential areas. Reports also speak of a deliberate campaign against non-Muslims. Over a thousand Sikhs have been murdered and another 20 thousand have fled to Pakistan, moving on to India.

The difficulty of restoring a country to peace after thirteen years of war cannot be underestimated. Afghanistan with its great diversity of ethnic groups -at least 36 languages are spoken by its 13 million people- is an 'ideal' place for inter-tribal conflict. Already divisions have come to light. Gen. Dostam would be quite content to form his own

Uzbek state if he were excluded from decision making in Kabul (The Economist, August 22nd, 1992, p.46). In the latest peace accord between the government and Hezb-i-Islami, it was significant that General Dostam was not present. A split among ethnic lines could lead to further territorial claims by other groups such as the Tadjiks under Ahmed Shah Massoud, or a rise in demand of a greater Pashtunistan. This would threaten the stability of Pakistan, the newly independent central Asian states, and the Indian sub-continent, a view reiterated by Iranian President Rasfanjani during his visit to Pakistan last year (NRC Handelsblad, September 8th, 1992).

Facing this bleak political future it is no surprise that Afghans are reluctant to return home. Many expect the fighting to end only when the old leaders have died or have physically fought out their differences. Traditionally the summer months are the period for fighting. Even with the new peace accords, many fear that the months to come will mean more bloodshed. Thus the many refugees bide their time, and try to carry on the best they can.

[1] I wrote this piece in October 1992. A year later, it is sad to mention that I did not need to update this paragraph.

Appendix II

Part One; The Present Situation of the Refugees

Part Two; The Problems Facing Returnees

Contents

Part One: The Present Situation of the Refugees

All refugees have been looking forward to the day when they can return home. For a while it looked as if their dream would come true. The present situation has, however, again brought despair, and waiting continues in a foreign country so very near to home.

I Afghans as Refugees

Before the war the Afghan population numbered 13 million individuals. During the war almost half fled the country and 1 million were killed. Afghanistan's population is ethnically mixed. The variety of people of central Asia meet in Afghanistan. Indian, Turkish, Persian, Arab and Mongol influences as well as European (Hellenistic, Roman) have contributed to the ethnic make up. Many of the ethnic groups are split by borders created by the empire building powers of the previous century.

The largest population group is formed by the Pashtuns. Numbering over 6.5 million, they live mostly in the east and south of the country. Approximately the same number are Pakistani residents. Most Pashtuns are farmers, but often combine sedentary agriculture with herding. A large number of Pashtuns, about one million, are totally nomadic (Newell and Newell 1981, p.23).

Living mainly in northern Afghanistan, the Tadjik number 3.5 million. Same as the smaller ethnic groups living in northern Afghanistan, such as the Uzbeks, Turkman and Kirghiz, the Tadjiks have their own republics now newly independent from the Soviet Union. Tadjiks live in settled communities mostly in towns and are also the most productive farmers in Afghanistan.

The Uzbek form the largest of the mongoloid groups. They are famous for their brilliant horsemen who developed the game of Bushkashi. The Turkman, known for their carpets and jewellery live in the northwest of the country and show similar ethnic characteristics. As a minority, the Hazara, also a mongoloid people, live mainly in the central part of the country. It is commonly believed that the Hazaras are descendants of Genghis Khan. However, they migrated here at a latter period (L. Dupree 1973, p.70).

The Baluch live in the south and are both semi-sedentary and semi-nomadic. The Nuristani inhabit the steep mountain valleys of north eastern Afghanistan.

Within Afghanistan it is the Pashtuns hold the most power, followed by the Tadjiks, and on the bottom, the Hazara find their place.

II Religion

The force that is common to all the different groups is the faith in Islam, with exception for the small minority of Hindus and Sikhs. The Muslim population is divided between the Sunni and the Shia branches of Islam at a ratio of about 80 to 20 percent. Islam is a way of life. It permeates life at home and at work. Islam is traditionally very strong in

Afghanistan, but a fundamentalist backlash has erupted after the defeat of the last 'communist' backed regime.

In Afghanistan women wear the veil more than anywhere else in the Muslim world. The 'chadri' covers them from head to toe with only a small netting to see through. In Kabul and other bigger towns, educated women walked around unveiled. During communist rule Islamic regulations were further relaxed. Notwithstanding, since the fall of the regime women have again taken to wearing the veil, also the educated ones.

One comment on the binding force of Islam. Afghans will always claim to be brothers through the Islam, but in practice the different Islamic factions have been in conflict for some time. Fundamentalist forces and more moderate factions fight for control. The strict Islamic law that pervades refugee society has made it difficult to criticize. The accused might claim that the accuser is acting in defiance of Islam. In Pakistan this carries the death penalty.

III Host countries

The two main host countries of Afghan refugees are Iran and Pakistan. People from the western and northern provinces fled to Iran, while those of the east and south went predominantly to Pakistan. Ethnic background also played a role, with most Pashtuns fleeing to Pakistan, Turkman and other northwestern people going to relatives in Iran. Both countries have been supportive to the mujahedin and have accepted large numbers of refugees. Nevertheless, between the two nations there are significant differences.

Due to its bad relations with the west and other main aid donors such as Saudi Arabia, Iran has hardly been assisted in the costs of settling refugees. The security in the Iranian camps is of a much higher standard in contrast to the insecure, sometimes violent, atmosphere in Pakistan. The refugees in Iran live under the same strict Islamic law now in force in that country. But there are reports of abuse of Afghan refugees by Iranian authorities. Extortion and imprisonment seem quite common according to the Afghan Information Centre in Peshawar (Afghan Information Centre June-July 1991 p.43-46). Freedom of movement is also limited in Iran and some Afghans have moved to Pakistan precisely for this reason.

Friendly relations with the United States, Saudi Arabia and China, helped Pakistan in gaining a much larger sum for both military and humanitarian aid. Coordination of aid resources is significantly better in Pakistan, benefiting the refugees. The superior provision of food and other basic supplies has made Pakistan a more desirable place of refuge.

IV Living Conditions of the Pakistan based Refugees

Living standards for the greater majority of Afghan refugees is not very high. As in all refugee situations, the allocated land is never of the highest standard. Some examples are Kacha Gari Camp, located on the edge of a military testing ground, or Aza Gil, a very long strip of land in between the Kabul river and the main road from Peshawar to

Appendix I

The Historical Background of the Afghan War and the Afghan Refugee Crisis

Islamabad. Here malaria goes rampant in the summer months. The best land is of course already occupied by the local population.

Along a 240 kilometres stretch of the Afghan-Pakistan border there are 321 designated settlement areas for Afghan refugees. These settlement areas are the only places recognized by the Pakistani government. Official aid is also limited to these areas.

The settlements are located in an area of semi-arid plains and mountains. The weather varies enormously. As the winds and snow sweep down from the Hindu-Kush and the Himalayas in winter, temperatures can drop below -15 degrees in some places. Summer temperatures reach up to 45-50 degrees. For Afghans this is terribly hot, Afghanistan climate being much milder.

Trees and other fuel sources are scarce and so is water. The people have to compete heavily with the local population, as with each other, to gather the necessary daily needs. Women and children have to risk hostile confrontation as they carry out their daily tasks (N.H. Dupree 1991, p.3).

The Afghans have been known for their strong tradition of self- reliance. This was evident when the refugee 'camps' changed quickly into refugee 'villages'. When refugees first arrived, they were given tents to accommodate them. In months the tent camps gave way to mud brick buildings made from locally available materials (Bartel and Segerstrom 1992, p.6). Made from clay, the houses blend into the landscape, resembling those in the villages of Afghanistan, though smaller in size and much more compact.

The building of houses was a definite improvement in physical comfort, but the crowded conditions still offer little privacy. This is especially distressful to women who, -albeit under cover of the veil-, are not allowed to freely leave the household. They are confined to small spaces. At home in Afghanistan the larger courtyards gave much more room for work and play (N.H. Dupree, 1991, p.3).

Most refugees come from the rural areas and had to leave their land behind. In the settlement areas, the limited land available and its poor quality means that farming on any significant scale is out of the question. Land scarcity also limits the number of livestock. Only a small number of animals, goats, sheep and chickens can be kept. The Afghans in camps are mainly dependent on food hand-outs of the Pakistani government, the United Nations, other NGOs and what they may earn themselves.

As Afghans are not confined to the camps, some have found housing in other areas. This is limited to the few who can afford to pay the higher rent. Due to the refugee situation, and thus a high demand of living space, rents are high and beyond the reach of the average refugee.

V Physical and Economic mobility

An important aspect of the Pakistan situation is the freedom which has been given to the Afghans. Compared to other refugee situations around the world, also that of Afghans

in Iran, movement is hardly restricted. The mujahedin have never been hindered in crossing the border to fight the Afghan and Soviet military. The great number of ordinary refugees are also free to leave the camps.

Freedom of movement was joined with economic liberty. Afghans are free to find employment, but are not allowed to buy land or other property (Christensen 1984, p.2). Even though not entirely legal, Afghans are not restricted when setting up businesses or working for Pakistani companies. The semi-legal status of Afghan businessmen has given some the golden opportunity to become very wealthy. Being able to avoid taxation, they can deliver goods at much more competitive prices than the Pakistani counterparts. Many of the transport services are now in the hands of Afghans. Their big Bedford trucks and Mercedes buses are driven to all places in Pakistan. Many other businesses in trade and manufacture are also controlled by Afghans. This success is, however, limited to the lucky few.

Most Afghan refugee households are very poor. Work is scarce, traditional means of production have been abandoned. In refugee situations farmers rarely have enough land to farm, traders do not have investment capital, trained personnel do not have employment opportunities, and students do not have facilities to continue their studies (Aga Khan and Bin Talal 1986, p.67). People are greatly dependent on aid supplied by different organizations. The situation in Pakistan seems to have become worse since the Soviet Union has disintegrated. Western nations have lost interest and aid is less forthcoming.

It is in this crisr that the Afghan youth finds itself. Traditional systems have disappeared and they have to make due in a situation in which the knowledge of their fathers and mothers no longer fully apply. They are forced to fend for themselves, replacing childhood with adult responsibilities.

Part Two: The Obstacles faced by Returnees

During thirteen years of fighting Afghanistan has been turned into a disaster area. In the cities many services have been disrupted, clean water and electricity supplies are unreliable. The services are at present not even being restored. The former rebel groups are engaged in fighting each other instead of rebuilding the ravaged country.

I Ruined Agriculture and Housing

A big problem in the countryside is the presence of mines. These lie widely scattered in the most fertile and thus more densely populated areas. An estimated 10 to 20 million mines have been indiscriminately strewn from Soviet planes. Often mine fields were not mapped, the objective being only to disrupt the agricultural base of the resistance. Many mines were designed to maim and not to kill people and livestock. Made from plastic they resembled toys, making them attractive to children. Teachers and social workers are being trained to clear mines, but few large scale mine-clearing operations have yet been undertaken. Since the refugees have been returning, the number of returnees wounded by mines has more than doubled (UNHCR Update July 15, 1992).

Even if the fields were safe, many more problems hinder an easy return. Whole villages have been destroyed. Proper housing is non-existent and schools, Mosques and hospitals have to be rebuilt (NRC Handelsblad August 5th, 1992). Reports coming back from Afghanistan speak of returning refugees living among the ruins of villages, without adequate food and water.

Afghanistan is a barren country, and wood is scarce; finding building materials is very difficult and very expensive. Returnees break down their houses in Pakistan and take along all the useful construction materials, such as wooden beams and plumbing. Areas in refugee settlements now resemble long abandoned villages. Sometimes fights break out as some try to take the communal water pipes (Afghan Information Centre, March-June, 1992 p.38).

Targeted destruction by the military and subsequent lack of maintenance have damaged the irrigation networks in Afghanistan that are essential in this dry land. Since the beginning of the war this complex system of water channels has been neglected. These channels -constructed over hundreds, if not thousands of years- carry on for miles. At places they have been hewn into the side of mountains, go underground or weave their way through fields. They need constant care as the heat, the cold, and water erode the banks and beds.

II Too Many Weapons

Afghanistan is also one of the most heavily armed areas of the world. Machine guns and rocket launchers are not what one could call scarce. Their use in settling even small disputes results in heavy casualties. After the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia sent at least three hundred captured Iraqi tanks to the mujahedin groups to help fight the government. The United Nations Development Program 'Quality of Life Index' places Afghanistan in the ranks of Mozambique, Liberia and Angola as one of the most unsafe places (UNDP New York, 1992).

It seems now that many weapons are finding their way into other trouble spots in the area. This is destabilizing the whole region. With the break-down of the Soviet Union the Muslim states around Afghanistan have become very labile. Afghans, seasoned by years of guerrilla warfare, turn up in all trouble spots. Afghanistan with its country side beyond reach of national or international control, is now the largest producer of heroin. The hard-fought revolution is rapidly changing into a patchwork of criminal activities. An influx of arms from Afghanistan has been reported from Tadjikistan.

A growing movement of Muslim fundamentalists is trying to increase their power in the surrounding countries. Pakistan faces a growing number of armed groups in both Sind province and Kashmir. In return leftover soldiers from other trouble spots have been coming to Afghanistan. Palestinians, Saudi mercenaries, warriors backed by Iran, Libya or Iraq all find their way to Afghanistan. These are men for whom fighting has become a way of life and see Afghanistan as an other place to fight the Jihad against the infidels (Liu and LeVine 1991, p.26-27).

III \The Rise of Fundamentalism

Orthodox Islam proved to be the strongest force of opposition against communist regime. The war was a Holy War. Afghans see the hand of Allah helping the total defeat of communism. A strong sentiment of continuing and strengthening their religion comes as no surprise. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar does not stand alone in this, although he is one of the most radical among the former rebels. Ahmed Shah Massoud is also a devout muslim. But what are the limits of an Islamic state, how safe will it be for more moderate people and other beliefs? Islamic law has already been introduced and thieves have had hands cut off and others publicly hanged in Kabul. It is likely that religious fanaticism may completely take over and make Afghanistan into another intolerant religious state.

With no permanent solution yet in sight for the current political rivalry and accompanying violence, a coordinated effort in rebuilding Afghanistan is still awaited. Until that time, only limited progress can be made in solving the long term problems. Large scale mine clearing operations, aid programs to rebuild houses and hospitals can only be coordinated with peace. Even then, it is not likely that the international community will really be interested in Afghanistan. The political infighting has made many aid donors turn away and will not be easily convinced to re invest.

With all the problems mentioned above, and they are very serious indeed, it is also necessary to mention some positive developments. However bleak the political situation, the devastation of fields and houses, there are definite gains being made in the rebuilding process. Outside the major cities, where rivalry is not as strong, many people have returned to their former villages. Reports mention a satisfactory harvest and that houses are being rebuilt. Many trees, for fruit, lumber and firewood, are being planted. Very important is that the people are doing this by themselves or with only limited help from the different organizations.

It is sad that the political crisis in Kabul determines what the different donor nations will contribute to aid organizations involved in restoring Afghanistan.

Contents

I Introduction

On the night of December 24, 1979 Soviet troops crossed the border into Afghanistan. In the years thereafter, fighting between the Afghan resistance and Soviet backed security forces led to a mass exodus of refugees. Almost a third of the population fled to the neighboring countries of Iran and Pakistan, others sought a safe haven in the cities resulting in grave overpopulation in the urban centres. In the cities the number of inhabitants rapidly doubled.

To date, the Afghans still form the single largest refugee population in the world. Before repatriation began in 1990, there were 3.2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and another 2 million Afghans in Iran. Since then, almost one million have returned home to the more peaceful areas in the countryside. (UNHCR Update July 15, 1992). Even though a record number are leaving, many are staying behind and are waiting for a more secure situation. Political rivalries are the cause of continued, sometimes heavy, fighting. This is especially the case in the capital, Kabul. There is also disturbing evidence of ethnic and religious tensions which may eventually split the country. Due to these problems some former refugees, as well as new ones, are again coming to Pakistan.

The situation in and around Afghanistan is at present very volatile. The former Soviet-backed government of President Najibullah was toppled in May 1992, and a new government of former mujahedin leaders was formed. It was hoped that the different mujahedin groups would unite and start rebuilding the country. Donor countries and aid organizations were ready for massive reconstruction. The new administration has, however, been plagued by internal rivalry. Other mujaheddin groupings also challenge the government and the fighting continues. In particular, the fundamentalist, Pashtun-based, Hezb-i-Islami, one of the strongest militia under the leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, has been resisting the more moderate coalition in Kabul of President Rabbani and defense minister Ahmed Shah Massoud. Numerous cease-fires have been called, but so far there is still no guarantee for a lasting peace[1].

In the meantime two to three million refugees in Pakistan are still waiting to return home, many since the end of 1979. For fourteen years now, they have been living in refugee camps, surviving on aid provided by donor countries and aid organizations. Sheer economic pressure has forced people into all types of different, minimal jobs. Poverty has forced every member of the family to work outside their traditional roles.

Without going into great historical detail, it is important to mention the position of the Afghan state in international affairs of the region. Even though superpower rivalry has diminished significantly, Afghanistan's problems of today stem from a long period of colonial competition and cold war paranoia.

II The Durrani Monarchy

The Afghan state founded by Ahmed Shah Durrani in 1747, consisted of a Pashtun tribal confederacy established to protect their interests against non-Pashtun rivals (Harrison 1990:47). Encompassing smaller ethnic groups this Pashtun-dominated Afghanistan extended from Meshed to Kashmir and Delhi, from the Amu Darya to the Arabian Sea.

The rise of colonial interests in the region in the early 19th century carved the once great Muslim empire, second only to the Ottoman empire of the 18th century, to less than half its original size. The geographic location made it important for the Indian subcontinent, both defensively and offensively. British troops annexed the territory between the Indus river and the Khyber pass. In doing so they divided the Pashtun population in half. This so-called Durand line is the border between present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan. Ever since, it has created political and military disputes -the Pashtunistan issue- for which, even at present, no solution has been found.

In the west, Persia recovered much of its former territories, aided by Czarist Russia. The Russian Empire had a strong interest in the warm water ports of the Arabian sea, and also looked upon Afghanistan as an easy jumping stone from which to invade the Indian subcontinent.

The tension of this period pressured the British to counter a, what they foresaw as a Russian expansionist policy, leading to two bloody Anglo-Afghan wars. British troops invaded Afghanistan, fighting from 1839 to 1842 and again from 1878 to 1880. Both expeditions resulted in heavy casualties and defeat for the British forces (Dupree 1973, p.377-413).

By the end of the 19th century, Britain and Czarist Russia came to a mutual understanding. Afghanistan was recognized as a buffer zone, separating the British ruled Indian sub-continent and the Russian empire. The British would control Afghan foreign affairs and Russia no longer observed Afghanistan as being in their sphere of influence. To further decrease the likelihood of conflict the Wakhun corridor was added in 1895, running from Afghanistan to the Chinese border. The corridor divides the Indian north west province and the Russian Pamir mountains (Dupree 1973, 343-413; Arnold 1985, 2-3).

The withdrawal of the British from the Indian subcontinent in 1947 marked an end to the official role of Afghanistan as colonial buffer state. A new struggle emerged as the new superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, competed for influence. Strained relations between the ex-colonies and the British served the Soviet Union's interests in the region. Conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan about the Pashtunistan issue resulted in temporal closures of their mutual border. Due to its fragile alliance with Pakistan, the United States could not risk supporting Afghanistan. Its influence in Afghan affairs was thus limited.

More and more often the Afghan government was forced to look towards the Soviet Union for economic and military aid. Afghanistan, however, did not take sides during the cold war, letting the Soviet Union and United States compete on an economic level. The Ministry of Mines and Industries was influenced by the Soviet Union and to some extent Europe, while the United States had interests in the Ministry of Commerce.

III The Period of Daoud

The overthrow of the monarchy of King Zahir Shah took place on July 17th, 1973 by Mohammed Daoud Khan, brother-in-law and first cousin of the King. Aided by the left wing Parcham (flag) party it led to the establishment of the Republic of Afghanistan. Under tenure as prime minister, he broadened and intensified his relations with other Muslim countries, trying to move away from dependence on the Soviet Union and the United States (Newell & Newell 1981, 55). Daoud Khan also came to an agreement with the then prime minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, on a solution for Pashtunistan problem.

A turning point in the reign of Daoud Khan occurred when he was given approval for a new constitution. Daoud Khan, now in the position of President, appointed friends, sons of friends, family, and members of the old royal family to his new cabinet. Furthermore, he purged the Parcham party from the government. In response, the two major leftist parties, the Khalg (peoples) and Parcham parties, whom, during the Daoud period were fierce rivals, united against Daoud Khan. There followed political assassinations, mass anti-government demonstrations, and the arrests of leftist leaders. Before he was apprehended, the U.S. educated Khalgi leader, by the name of Hafizullah Amin, contacted party members in the armed forces and quickly organized a makeshift, but successful coup (Arnold 1985, 65-66). Daoud Khan and most of his family was rounded up in the presidential palace and executed. The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan was born on April 27, 1978.

IV The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan

The president of the Revolutionary Council, Nur Mohammed Taraki, was also elected prime minister and secretary general of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan. Babrak Karmal, a Parchami leader, and Hafizullah Amin were elected deputy prime ministers. The new leaders affirmed their independence of Moscow and claimed their policies to be based on Afghan nationalism, Islamic principles and socioeconomic justice. However, when reformist policies on landholding, marriage arrangements, equal rights for women and education began to be forced through, accompanied by Marxist rhetoric, reform programs began to be seen as a threat to traditional life (Newell & Newell 1981, 77-78). Especially the rural population, who traditionally resisted interference from central governments, started to resent these reforms at an early stage.

Agrarian reforms imperilled the existing socio-economic framework within the society as it did not provide any viable replacements. Social reforms threatened to erode cherished cultural values. The passage of power into the hands of de-tribalized outsiders was also viewed as an intolerable intrusion into the closely knit, kin-related rural society (Hammond 1984,69-72).

Uncoordinated anti-government revolts spread throughout all of Afghanistan's provinces, bombs exploding in Kabul and other major cities. The government, by now internally divided, as the Khalg party expelled Parchmani diplomats, including Karmal -who was sent as Afghan ambassador to Czechoslovakia-, reacted with harsh, repressive measures, alienating virtually every segment of society. Religious, political and intellectual elites were

jailed or executed. Ground attacks and aerial bombings destroyed villages and killed countless numbers of civilians living in rural areas. Estimates range between 50,000 to 100,000 of people having disappeared or eliminated in Afghan jails in the period between April 1978 and December 1979. By the end of 1979 more than a thousand refugees were crossing the border into Pakistan everyday.

On September 14, 1979 Taraki was killed in an armed confrontation between Taraki and Amin supporters. Amin seeked broader support for Afghan security, appealing to the United States and Pakistan. His efforts were, however, in vain. The chaos created by the head of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan prompted the Soviet Union to invade on the night of December 24, 1979. Amin and many of his followers were executed. Karmal was flown in from the Soviet union, instated as prime minister, president of the Revolutionary Council and Secretary General of the Peoples Republic of Afghanistan.

Giving the devil his due, Karmal was disposed during a foreign visit and replaced by the former head of the Afghan secret service KHAD, Dr. Mohammed Najibullah. Najibullah stayed in power until April 16th of 1992. In agreement with rebel leaders, a number of government military commanders toppled his regime. Today he is still sheltering in the United Nations headquarters in Kabul.

V The Soviet Presence and Withdrawal

During the Soviet occupation, as one can freely call it, fighting forced millions of Afghans to flee their homes. As many as 140 thousand Soviet troops were present at one given time. Soviet tanks shelled villages, planes and helicopters bombarded fleeing civilians and mined the farmland. In the first months of the war the Afghan army shrunk drastically due to large scale desertion. In less than six months the army had halved in size (New York Times, March 6, 1980).

Many of the horrors were kept secret from the world; no press was allowed to witness the actions of the Soviet military. News consisted mainly of eye-witness reports of refugees. Only a handful of brave individuals, while risking their lives, tried to bring the true story to light. The limited information was sufficient to make clear that the war took on preposterous proportions, comparable to the American war in Vietnam. Innocent civilians were brutally killed, no consideration was given for human rights, many being jailed and tortured. Chemical weapons were used and new weapons tested. The lists of cruelties are truly endless.

The United States and some Arab nations sent billions of dollars in both military and humanitarian aid to the resistance groups and refugees in Pakistan and Iran. Iran, being at odds with both the United States and many of its Arab neighbours, received only a small proportion. The mujahedin, (Holy warriors of Islam) vowed to end the communist occupation and restore Afghanistan as a free independent Islamic state (Kaplan 1990, p.3). With military supplies readily arriving, the mujahedin scored numerous and severe casualties to Soviet and government troops. The rising body-count and high financial costs finally forced the Soviet troops to withdraw. The new leadership in Moscow, under a more realistic President Gorbachov, made this much easier.

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scooters, and motorcycles have engines which require considerable amounts of oil to be added to the fuel. These engines have been outlawed for sometime in the west, but are, as with so many things, still considered fit for export to developing countries.

Peshawar is a major city, thus it has many restaurants, where, I have to admit, very good food is served. The only time I experienced any stomach problems was after eating an overpriced slice of pizza at the American Club. Everything on the street however, is cooked or fried on beds of burning charcoal. Just down from the hotel is an area called Namic Mundi. This is considered one of the best areas for eating in the old city. Dozens of restaurants line the side of the street. At lunch and dinner hours the grills are lit and the meats, rice and vegetables are cooked. Smoke from charcoal and burning fat rises slowly, if at all, to combine with the exhaust fumes already present. The result is a cloud similar to that produced by a small forest fire.

Peshawar is dusty. Wiping of minute sand particles is an endless task for anyone obsessed with cleanliness. It is so very fine that it will penetrate everywhere, no matter how well sealed. Again the traffic helps, stirring up the dust, clouds trailing the bigger trucks and buses. To counter this the roads are kept wet, turning dust to mud. Special people are employed for this important task. Two times a day, once in the early morning and again in the afternoon an old man comes walking down the street. Carrying a leather water bag, he sprays the street and everything on the road. Individual restaurants and shops also regularly wet the street, trying to keep the dust down. Unwary pedestrians are bound to end up with a wet shoe at some time or another.

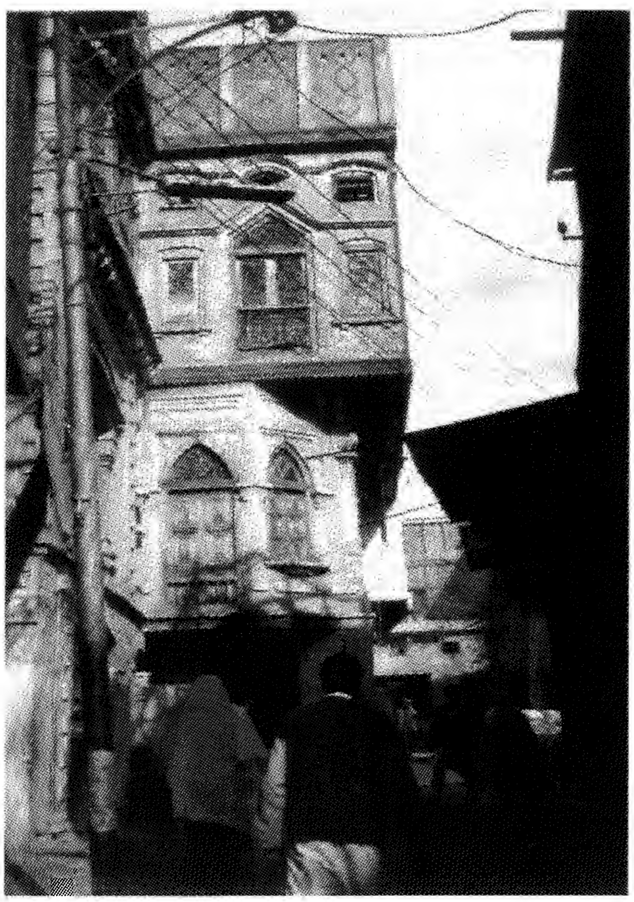
This combination of soot, smoke and dust accumulates as the day progresses. I should remind the reader that at the time of year I was present, temperatures were at a low, never higher than twenty degrees or so. The summer months, with temperatures as high as fifty degrees celsius, must be unbearable under these conditions of pollution. Even though it resulted in a steady coughing on my part, the pollution was also a source of entertainment. On some days a friend and I would sit on the roof of the hotel and drink tea. As the day progressed we would observe how the smog was slowly rising in the street below. We would try to guess whether it was a truck or bus that was breaking through the seemingly impermeable cloud below. The day would end as we watched the sun descend behind a mist of purple haze.

The atmosphere of noise and dust accompanied all daily activities and eventually became an accepted part of life. This was also the case with the scenery and life outside the relative calm of the hotel room. It was wise to dress in local clothing, shawar-kamiz, when venturing outside. Jeans and european shirts attract attention. Calls of 'Hello mister, how are you? Where are you from? Welcome to Pakistan' etc, become, even when friendly, very tedious.

The main argument for wearing local clothing is that one goes unnoticed. If dressed properly, many Europeans could pass as Afghan. Blue eyes and blond hair are common. However, small variations in fashion can betray ones true identity. Everyone dresses similarly, in pastel coloured shawar kamiz. Hats vary from darker grey to light brown. Other colours arouse suspicion. A very subtle difference I noticed when I was carrying



Two Flying Coaches having a friendy competition on a crowded street
Peshawar, 1992.



A small street in the Old city.
Notice the concrete structure on top
of the old Hindu building to the left.
Peshawar, 1993.

my bag. When carrying it in my hand nothing the matter, as soon as I hung it over my shoulder the cries of 'hello mister' sprung up again.

While walking in the street, one is confronted with many different images. These images are most impressive in the first weeks, then they fade into the daily routine. For example, down the street of the hotel there are two chicken salesmen. Unlike in the west, chickens are sold fresh, that is, still alive, kept in cages, or tied up in a pile. When the costumer chooses a chicken it is grabbed and slaughtered. Butchering happens right in front of the other chickens, the head is chopped off, feathers are plucked and guts removed in full view. For the chickens watching this brutal murder of their kin the odds of being the next increase as the day goes by. The fate of chickens affected me for some time, not always without humour. If a chicken escaped the cage, which happened from time to time, there is no hope, Hungry individuals have no second thoughts about chasing the getaway and having it for lunch. Even if a chicken should survive a chase by human predators, nighttime is a time of terror as wild dogs and cats roam the alleyways in search of anything edible. After some time, my interest in the fate of poultry faded into the scenes of the daily activities.

Open air slaughter in the city is limited to chickens. One does see butchered cows and goats transported on the back of pick-up trucks. And, of course, there are the tanneries where the skins are collected, vile places which are best avoided. It is surprising that the streets are not very dirty, that is, very little real waste. The dirt is mostly mud or dust, depending on the weather, and flem, spitting being common practice.

The main streets are filled with little shops or workplaces selling or making everything that one might need. All shops are small or medium size family businesses, there are no warehouses or supermarkets. Those of the same trade are located together in specific areas. On one street only electrical appliances are sold, on another cloth materials, in again another area wood products are on offer. Whole rows of rickshaw and motorcycle workshops crowd together.

In between these conglomerates of shops there is always one tea house which supplies all the shops with tea. Chai-wallas (tea men) are always rushing about delivering green tea or tea with milk and on the way back, picking up empty pots and cups.

Shops or workplaces never control the whole production process, every shop taking care of only one or two steps. A good example is the bazaar where rubber tires are recycled. One shop buys and sells used tires. Another strips the tires sorting out the different rubber types. These are then sold to workshops where the rubber is turned into buckets, sandals, and large containers. The finished product is then sold to the shop across the street for retail to the private sector. One might ask why a shop does not try to take up all the tasks mentioned above. In a way this does happen, most businesses operate in a family sphere, each brother or cousin having a (work) shop at one stage of the production. Another factor is that not many have the capital to buy all the products and tools necessary for the complete production. Most business in the bazaar goes on credit. Everyone remembers what is owed. The accounts are settled when the products are sold for cash.

Going deeper into town, taking shortcuts through all the little streets, one comes through the residential areas. Many children play outside after finishing school. An open space is quickly turned into a cricket playing field by the boys. Girls huddle together, gossiping and giggling, the younger ones play tag with the boys. On the roofs boys fly their kites, challenging others in kite fights. The string attached to the kites is coated with small pieces of glass. This enables competitors to cut each others string.

More women are seen here than in the bazaars, but their faces are always covered. The only uncertainty of walking in the little alleyways is to, by accident, walk into a private living area. It is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between a private and public gateway. Making a mistake, could have unpleasant consequences.

In the older sections of town, houses vary from old Hindu architecture, beautiful buildings with traditional woodwork, to modern day concrete. Sometimes there are gruesome combinations with concrete structures placed on the old building. All houses have strong metal or wooden doors and no windows on the ground floor.

Walking through the old city one is bound to arrive at Andershier, the area of goldsmiths and antique dealers. The centre street, gold street, is narrow and full of small shops filled mostly with gold jewellery. Some shops are no more than 1.5 meters across and a few meters deep, the rent being very high. To the left and right are small side streets and alleyways filled with tiny workshops producing all kinds of jewellery. Men and boys sit together on the ground behind small work tables and make, by hand, very beautiful pieces. They work with copper, silver and gold. Different gem and semi-precious and gem-stones, such as tourmaline, ruby, Kunzite and Lapis-lazuli, are cut and fitted to earrings, bracelets, rings and necklaces.

In the enclosed streets, the vapours of sulphuric acid and welding are ever present in the stagnant air. In the gutters blue liquid can be seen, chemical waste flowing directly into the open sewer system.

Next to the workshops the antique salesmen are located. There are shops full of beautiful things. Some are filled only with archaeological material, such as old bronze and pottery. This comes mostly from Afghanistan where the war has made it so easy to rob and pillage historical sites. Shops can be specialized in jewellery such as Turkman chest amulets, traditional head gear and beautiful embroideries. Some are wholesalers, selling thousands of pieces to American and European dealers every year.

Then there are those who sell wooden furniture from the northern territories. If you are interested to see more and the dealers recognize you as a potential customer, one is sure to be led to another building, to a storage place. One will then surely be overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of goods available. Objects vary from wooden boxes and chairs to whole doorways and house fronts.

If one wishes to purchase anything the local currency is needed. Right outside gold street are the money changers. These are legal business establishments and money can be exchanged quite freely without any filling of papers. Travellers cheques and even bank

Learning the rough way



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